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NOVEMBER 27 1981

contents

MARK GIROUARD	Lutyens: The Work of the English Architect - 1869-1914 (Hayward Gallery)	
	Roderick Graddidge: Edwin Lutyens - Architect Laureate	
	Margaret Richardson: Lutyens and the Sea Captain	
	Robert Grant Irving: Indian Summer - Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi	
	Lawrence Weaver: Houses and Gardens by E. L. Lutyens	
J. M. RICHARDS	Arthur M. Edwards: The Design of Suburbia	1379-80
KENNETH MINOGUE	John P. Burke, Lawrence Crocker, Lyman H. Legters (Editors): Marxism and the Good Society	1381
D. C. WATT	Alexander de Conde (Editor): Encyclopaedia of American Foreign Policy	
MICHAEL HOFMANN	John E. Findling: Dictionary of American Diplomatic History	1382
	A Home Movie (poem)	
LARZER ZIFF	Andrew Delbanco: William Ellery Channing	
ELTNO E. MORISON	Thomas C. Cochran: Frontiers of Change	1383-84
J. M. CAMERON	Donald Davis (Editor): The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse	
RICHARD MURPHY	Altar (poem)	1385
JAN MORRIS	Gavin Young: Slow Boats to China	
NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE	Tristram Jones: Adrift	
ALAN MOORE	The Matchbox (poem)	1386
D. J. ENRIOT	Stephen Humphries: Hooligans or Rebels?	1387
TOM SHIPPEY	Fiction	
ALAN BOLD	Kingsley Amis (Editor): The Golden Age of Science Fiction	
DAVID PROFUMO	Dave Smith: Outlines	1388
	B. V. Bell: Food for Worms	
CELINA FOX	Walton Rawls: The Great Book of Currier and Ives' America	
RICHARD CALVOCCESI	Michael Croydon: Ivan Albright	
SYLVIA KANTARIS	The Tenth Muse (poem)	1389
PETER CONRAD	Commentary	
JONATHAN KEATES	Charpentier: Louise (English National Opera)	
	Rameau: Castor et Pollux (English Bach Festival) and Handel: Partonopeo (Sadler's Wells)	
PATRICK O'CONNOR	Emmanuel Chabrier (Wigmore Hall)	
MICHAEL MASON	The French Lieutenant's Woman (general release)	
STEPHEN PLAICE	Lenz (London Film Festival)	
HUMPHREY CARPENTER	W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood: The Dog Beneath the Skin (New Hall Moon Theatre)	
STANLEY WELLS	All's Well That Ends Well (Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford)	1390-92
	Among this week's contributors	
	To the Editor	1393-94
HUOH TINKER	Brian May: The Third World Calamity	1394
WILFRID MELLERS	Mark W. Booth: The Experience of Song	1395
H. S. FERNS	J. L. Grenatstein: A Man of Influence - Norman A. Robertson and Canadian Statecraft 1929-68	
TIM MASON	Hans Speier: From the Ashes of Disgrace	1396
LUCY MAIR	Olusegun Obasanjo: My Command	
ALAN JENKINS	Ian S. Macniven and Horry T. Moore (Editors): Literary Lifelines - the Richard Aldington-Lawrence Durrell Correspondence	
	Lawrence Durrell: A Smile in the Mind's Eye. Collected Poems	
JONATHAN KEATES	Robin Gilmour: The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel	1397-98
MARY R. LEFKOWITZ	Princess Ida, the Amazons and a women's college curriculum (article)	
HERMIONE LEE	Margaret Crossland: Beyond the Lighthouse	1399-1401
PHYLLIS GROSSKURTH	John Pilling: Autobiography and Imagination	
CHARLES MADOE	J. P. Ward: Poetry and the Sociological Idea	
PATRICIA CRAIO	Hanna Charney: The Detective Novel of Manners	1402
PETER KEMP	Claude J. Summers: Christopher Isherwood	
J. S. BRATTON	Commentary	
CAROL RUMENS	Edward Bulwer Lytton: Money (The Other Place, Stratford)	
GAMINT SALGADO	A reading by Andrei Voznesensky	1403
	Duncan Forbes: Favourites (Northcott Theatre, Exeter)	

Between Euclid and the elves

By Mark Girouard

Lutyens: The Work of the English Architect 1869-1914
Hayward Gallery
Catalogue 200pp. Arts Council of Great Britain. £7.75 at the exhibition, otherwise £15.
0 7287 0304 1

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Edwin Lutyens
Architect Laureate
167pp. George Allen and Unwin. £13.95.
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MARGARET RICHARDSON:
Lutyens and the Sea Captain
About 44 unnumbered pages. Scholar Press. £4.95 until December 31, then £5.95.
0 85967 646 3

ROBERT GRANT IRVING:
Indian Summer
Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi
406pp. Yale University Press. £20.
0 300 02422 3

LAWRENCE WEAVER:
Houses and Gardens by E. L. Lutyens
344pp. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club. £19.50.
0 902028 98 7

Architecture has long been the despair of the media. Buildings (on the whole) cannot move or be moved. Trying to film them is bad enough, exhibiting them is even worse. Producers of films on architecture have tended to rely on putting TV personalities on the screen in ever-changing gear, to afford relief to those boring old buildings. Exhibitions of any size have been few and far between, have tended to rely on architect's drawings and blown-up photographs, and have seldom been well attended. The Palladio exhibition, which came to England from Italy in 1975, extended the range of exhibits into three dimensions by its lavish use of architectural models; even so it never quite came alive. Some of the exhibitions at the RIBA's Little Heinz Gallery in Portman Square have made stimulating experiments in new methods of presentation, but by the nature of the gallery they could only do so on a modest scale. On the whole, architecture has done best when it has formed part of a larger exhibition, as in the Hayward's Art in

Revolution (on the art of the Russian Revolution) in 1971, or the V & A's Victorian Church Art in 1971-72. The Lutyens exhibition currently on show at the Hayward makes history as the first big exhibition to project an architect in a convincing and enjoyable way. Inside the concrete cage of the Hayward it has created a complete Lutyens world, using the spaces and changes of level of the gallery, but effectively disguising its architecture (which Lutyens would surely have loathed). But it conceals architecture with more architecture: each of the main spaces is given an architectural character which evokes the contrasting characters of the different episodes in Lutyens' career, starting with the scrubbed oak beams and picturesque brickwork of his Surrey beginnings, and ending with the formal grandeur of Liverpool Cathedral and New Delhi. Timber arcades, brick fireplaces and floors, classical piers and doorcases, coved or vaulted ceilings, and other architectural details copied from or inspired by Lutyens' own work are brilliantly used to create the appropriate settings, within which drawings, photographs, furniture, books, letters, sketches, personal relics and a succession of models of individual buildings combine to entertain and inform the visitor. Even the fire doors have been given a Lutyens styling.

Such a transformation is not cheap. The exhibition has cost well in excess of £100,000 and would never have taken place in the form it has if the exhibition committee (and especially its chairman, Colin Amery) had not raised the money to fill what the catalogue preface calls "the gap between the ambitions of the committee and the resources of the Arts Council". But money, however essential, would not of itself have been enough, without the knowledge, panache and flair contributed by the designer of the exhibition, Piers Gough, and the rest of the committee.

So much for the exhibition, but what about its subject? Why spend over £100,000 on Lutyens, in preference to any other architect? Partly, without doubt, because Lutyens has come into fashion in a big way in the last few years, especially in America where he is the in-figure among American architects disillusioned with the Modern Movement. In addition, unlike many architects, who submerge themselves in their work and are hard to present as individuals, he is an obvious "personality", whose irrepressible facetiousness irritated some as much as it delighted others, and survives in the exhibition in the endless visual jokes, puns, stories and games which he drew all through his career. He designed furniture and fittings which, unlike his buildings, can be brought to the Hayward. He had a very large output, and there are strong contrasts between the work of different periods of his career. And he is closely bound up with two current objects of nostalgia: the country house and the British Empire.

But beyond the accidents of fashion or convenience lies the belief that Lutyens is one of the world's great architects. "In his lifetime", as Christopher Hussey put it, "he was widely held to be our greatest architect since Wren if not, as many maintained, his superior." Hussey's superb and sympathetic biography of Lutyens (published in 1950) set out to establish him as "the last great architect of the age of humanism". Already in 1931, Robert Byron had told readers that "a great architect, of the calibre of Bernini, Mansard and Wren, is working in their midst." These formidable claims, zealously propagated by *Country Life* in Lutyens' own lifetime and preserved by a small but influential group of admirers during the high peak of the Modern Movement, have been enthusiastically restated by a new generation of architects and architectural historians in the last few years.

Literature to support or illustrate these claims is now becoming available in increasing quantities. The exhibition has sparked off something of a Lutyens industry in the publishing world. As an advance guard in 1980 came Peter Inskip's monograph and Mary Lutyens's moving and revealing study of her father. This year's crop includes the exhibition catalogue itself, richly illustrated, packed with information, and containing essays by Mary Lutyens, Jane Brown, John Cornforth, Gavin Stamp and John Summerson. Roderick Graddidge perceptively analyses a selection of Lutyens' buildings. Margaret Richardson (whose catalogue

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of the Lutyens drawings belonging to the RIBA came out in 1973) edit his whimsical illustrated "inventory" of the house which he designed for Captain Day of RMAS Briton, to amuse himself and the Captain on a voyage back from South Africa in 1919. Robert Grant Irving's monumental study of New Delhi tells the full story of its conception and creation in admirable detail, and is superbly illustrated. A reprint of Lawrence Weaver's *House and Gardens by E. L. Lutyens*, first published by *Country Life* in 1913, reveals the combination of exquisitely selective photography and enthusiastic description with which the magazine helped establish the architect in the first decades of his career. It seems a pity that no publisher has as yet reprinted Christopher Hussey's monograph, surely one of the half-dozen best architectural biographies of this century.

Of Lutyens's intense seriousness as an architect there can be no doubt. His facetiousness may have concealed but never impeded his total dedication to his craft. He set out to compete with and equal the architectural giants of the past. Architecture dominated his life, nearly ruined his marriage, and left him a comparatively poor man.

Charges that he was superficial, a clever showman who would put on an act in whatever style entertained his clients, do not bear looking into. Granted the accidents of the place and time of birth, his career developed on a consistent course. His Surrey childhood and youth, his training under Ernest George and his early friendship with and hero-worship of Gertrude Jekyll set him in orbit in the world of the vernacular revival, of enthusiasm for country crafts and country ways and suspicion of all cities except garden ones. It is doubtful how deeply this blithely Lutyens. He lived all his working life in London houses and in spite of a good deal of talk about "a little white house" in the country never came anywhere near buying or building it. His London garden was neglected, and he refused to allow flowers inside his own houses. Mary Lutyens describes his urban dress as an almost infinite gift for playing both with words and images, the kind of wit that enabled him to draw a few strokes and transform the

text of the most formal variety) play little part in his architectural drawings; even the dream house which he drew for Emily Lytton when he was courting her rises stark, clean and unrecaptured out of the ground. The exhibition catalogue reproduces a childhood drawing by him not of flowers or country cottages but a "design for a twin-screw engine for torpedo-boats and launches." Its intersecting wheels and pistons suggest the geometric intersections of many of his later designs: geometry, one suspects, always meant more to him than nature. Even in Minstead Wood, in the central shrine of his Surrey vernacular period, what Lawrence Weaver captions as a "fireplace in farm-house manner" is in fact a highly sophisticated exercise in contrasting and intersecting curves, infinitely removed in spirit from the work of vernacular craftsmen. (It has been re-created in the first room of the Hayward exhibition.)

Lutyens's fascination with geometry developed side by side with an interest in exploiting architecture as a stylistic language, and increasingly with exploiting the richest and longest lived language of all, that of the classical orders. Of his amazing inventiveness in both fields, exhibition and books provide abundant evidence. With apparently inexhaustible ease he could set curves playing against other curves, or intersect spheres with prisms, or prisms with each other. He could take a Georgian hipped-roof manor, a rusticated doorcase, an oriel window or an arrow-slit and by changes in position, proportion or material re-create them in new and unexpected forms. As Goodhart-Rendel put it, "in many doorways, chimney-pieces and bits of furniture of Lutyens's design one meets the sudden unanalysable felicity that makes one catch one's breath."

Lutyens's extraordinary talents are undeniable but they were accompanied by, and to some extent stimulated, weaknesses which seriously hindered him in his dedicated search for architectural greatness. Cleverness has its own dangers; it is too tempting to show it off. Lutyens had an almost infinite gift for playing both with words and images, the kind of wit that enabled him to draw a few strokes and transform the

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amoral letter-head of the P & O into a ferocious tiger or in reference to his unsuccessful dispute with his colleague Herbert Baker to make his determination to show how he can transform old fortresses becomes a little whimsical, in architecture as well as on paper. And along with a sometimes facile cleverness goes a certain lack of strength that expresses itself in too much prettification, too much cutting up of shapes. Lindisfarne Castle is praised in the Haywards catalogue for its "massive abstract qualities", but it is instructive to compare it with the original castle as drawn by C. R. Mackintosh a few years before Lutyens began to work on it, the massive abstract qualities were there already, and Lutyens softened and tamed them down rather than strengthened them.

Lutyens himself was increasingly aware of this weakness. He was always trying to discipline himself to achieve greater simplicity and strength. But he was not equipped by nature to build in the grand manner, however desperately he desired to do so. The medium-sized country houses of his thirties probably represented the scale most naturally suited to his talents and were the most obviously enjoyable of his creations. His design for the London County Hall competition of 1907 shows that a very large building was still beyond him. Then, in 1912, he had his great breakthrough, when first the New Delhi plan and then the Viceroy's House came his way.

It is hard to see the Viceroy's House as the triumph lauded by Lutyens's admirers. It has its amazing moments, above all the double horizontal line of the upper and lower cornices, stretching without a break across the 1,000 feet of the east front and its wings. In these, and in the superbly vigorous modelling of the stone-work above and between them, Lutyens at last attained the sublime. After that wonderful upper cornice nothing more was needed. But Lutyens lost his nerve; so simple and unqualified a statement was beyond him. Out of the centre projects his idiotic dome, that totally unconvincing symbol of the majesty of the Raj, accompanied by other unnecessary embellishments in the jelly-mould style of the period.

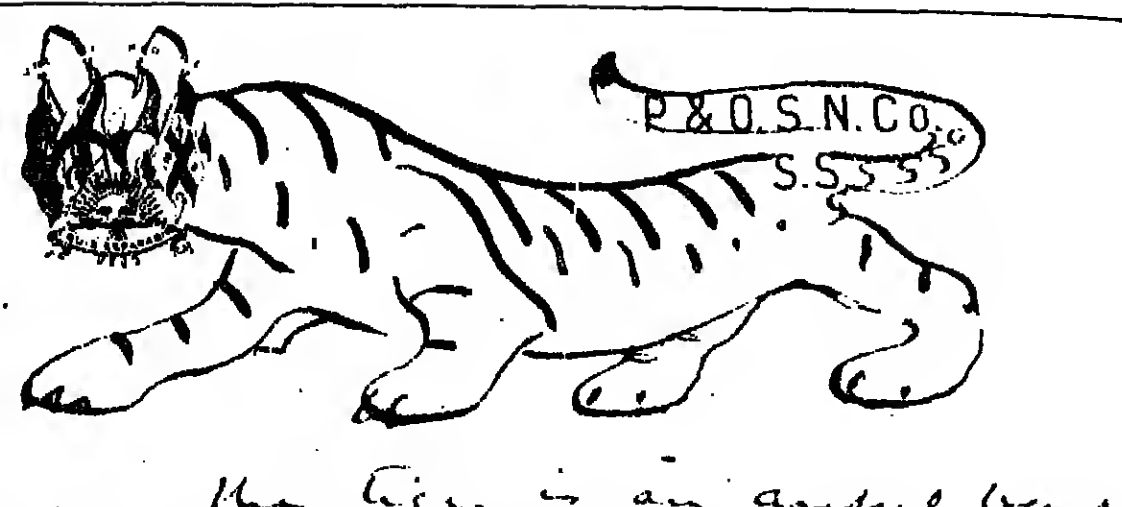
Lutyens (unlike his admirers) was never happy with the dome; he even, in one inspired response to a call for economy, suggested that it and the Durbar Hall below it should be omitted altogether. But the dome was not his only failure at Delhi. A plan on the scale of the Viceroy's House was beyond him; in spite of some grand moments it is unconvincing in the centre and muddled at the extremities. The even vaster planning of New Delhi itself was further beyond his powers. Compared to the inspired Chicago professionalism of Griffin in Canberra, it is amateurish and incompetent. The new city fails to relate to the old one, and the grand vista of King's Way to the rest of the new city. The endless roundabouts are endlessly confusing. Even the grand vista is not as grand as it ought to be. This is due less to the famous and disastrous extinction of the Viceroy's House by the slope of the final hill than to his marooning beyond its towers and grilles the empty formalities of Viceroy's Court. It completely fails to dominate the city as it was meant to. If the city as a whole succeeds in symbolizing anything it is not grandeur, still less humanity, but rather government totally divorced from ordinary people. As such it is perhaps England's most disastrous legacy to independent India.

Of course New Delhi was not entirely due to Lutyens. No doubt he was hamstrung by colleagues, committees and governments. Even so he must share responsibility for the failures of New Delhi, which relate to a weakness in him as an architect more basic than anything yet referred to. Almost all accounts of him stress his childlike or boyish qualities, using phrases such as "impetuous schoolboy" (Osbert Sitwell) "part schoolboy" (Lord Halifax) and "gay child" (Helen Nicholson). His friend E. V. Lucas described him as "still an eternal child, a minister of childish nonsense". Lord protect us from our friends, one might say, but Lutyens had a somewhat distressing habit of talking about himself in the same way, and cast himself in a child-like, or partly child-like role in some of his most meaningful relationships, especially with older women. In his early manhood he himself confessed that he enjoyed writing "as a child" to his "beloved Baa-Lamb", Barbara Webb - "so much easier than as something of this world's 28 years old". During the blissful year of his engagement to Emily Lytton they referred to each other as children, and it seems likely that this was initiated by him rather than by Emily; she called him "my

sweetest little boy-man", he described himself as "your little boy mate". When their marriage began to run into difficulties he apologized for his "spirit of childish whimsiness" and suggested that Emily "take me by the hand as though I was a little child". In 1917 his beloved Gertrude Jekyll "treats him like a child", according to Lady Sackville, the intimate friend and possibly mistress of his later years. He wrote love-letters to Lady Sackville in baby language and she treated him like a pet; he was "such a good little McNeid and so fluffy"; she was continually "sending him to his basket".

All this aspect of his private life, along with the jokes, puns and facetiousness that were so publicly apparent, may be explained as the surface armour of a shy man, or a means of relieving the strains endured by a creative one. But it is tempting to wonder whether they went deeper, to try to place him in the strange, embarrassing and as yet little explored world of late Victorian and Edwardian whimsicality, of the cult of Pan and the child, of J. M. Barrie and Peter Pan, who wants "always to be a little boy and to have fun". Barrie was one of Lutyens's best friends, and Lutyens designed the sets for the first production of *Peter Pan*.

This is difficult and unfamiliar territory for an architectural historian.



On his voyages to and from India - where he made nineteen visits in connection with the building of New Delhi - Lutyens always (as a government official) sailed on the P & O line. He often incorporated its letter headings, differently each time, in his illustrations when writing to his wife and children. In the drawing above, reproduced from the catalogue of the Lutyens Exhibition reviewed here, the Company's flags and emblem make the tiger's face. "Viverrum" was Lutyens's word for light-hearted occupations such as this.

orion. It involves the vexed question of the relationship between an architect's work and his personality and calls for subjective judgments with which many will disagree. But it is arguable that in some ways Lutyens was emotionally undeveloped, and that this lack of development seriously affected his work as an architect.

Hussey was perceptive about this aspect of Lutyens, although he gave it a different and much more complimentary explanation. He wrote of "the existence, behind the laughable, lovable facade, beyond the abounding inventiveness, of something morose, austere, as icy as Euclid". Lutyens's ultimate allegiance, he thought, was not to the human needs of his clients, but to "certain abstract and, as he was convinced, eternal values transcending moral considerations". His son Robert saw this as "the fundamental integrity of the artist, unmoved in the last resort by sympathy or charity, dispassionate and authoritarian". It is tempting, however, to interpret it in terms of weakness rather than strength, of a failure of the understanding which meant, for instance, that however vividly he projected his imagination into the life to be lived in his houses, he was always to some extent "playing house" rather than designing for the real needs of real people. There is a curious unreality about many of

his buildings, in spite of their brilliance. From this viewpoint his absorption in the creation of the Queen's doll's house becomes significant, as does his famous description of classical architecture as "the great game". New Delhi was the greatest game of all, played with complete dedication and a total failure to envisage it as an actual city where people would live and work.

There was, however, one work in which Lutyens transcended his limitations. His design for Liverpool Cathedral was the darling of his last years. It was never built beyond the crypt, but at least a very large model of it was made, and is the wonder of the Haywards exhibition. Here his preoccupations with geometry and abstract form, with the reinterpretation of old themes and with the classical language of architecture fuse perfectly together. The rather childish ingenuities and jelly-mould profiles of his Thiepval arch have been developed and enlarged to produce a complex but ordered whole. The vast cliff-like facades, fretted away above and dug into below, and the lonely adelic and silhouetted columns that articulate its upper peaks, are intensely moving. Alas, it was Lutyens's clients, not Lutyens himself, who lost their nerve; it is a sadly different silhouette which now crowns the slopes of Brownlow Hill.

in its early days was essentially a middle-class conveyance (it did not start operating until eight in the morning, by which time the lower classes were at work) and the tram, which was the working-class vehicle. West End property interests managed to keep trams out of the centre until they reached it below ground by way of the Kingsway tunnel early in the twentieth century. Even outside the centre trams were mostly confined to the working-class suburbs.

One would have liked more about housing densities, especially in relation to the particular style of living, for which the suburb coters and the style of landscape it creates. Edwards makes it clear that the low densities of the post-war planned extension of housing by means of the suburban estates of speculative builders and municipal authorities or of the new towns built by specially appointed corporations, were as much due to miscalculations about population growth on the part of Abercrombie and other planners as to any popular preference for the cottage type of house. In fact the suburban dwellers exported to the new towns sally missed to begin with the sense of neighbourliness inherent in close-packed urban streets and tenements. There is no discussion of the pros and cons of flats, and Edwards seems to assume that a suburb - unlike the traditional country town - must by definition be of low density, even when this means eating up land that might be preserved for agriculture. It would have been interesting if he had set out the arguments on which this assumption is founded.

Another who would conserve a treasured fragment of capitalism is Arthur Dignaturo in "Alienation and Justice in the market". His essay is a genuinely Marxist exercise in turning economics into a moral science, and its main drive is to demonstrate what a useless collection of parasites capitalist really are. His argument takes off from Joan Robinson's observation that there is an important difference between returns to capital and profits for capitalists, but it ends up taking radical thought back to about 1820, when it was the parasitism of the upper classes that most impressed the socialists of the day. Dignaturo's main concern, however, is to salvage the market, which has sometimes been thrown out with the bath-water by over-the-hill theorists. "Not the market", he tells us, "but class structure and class determined technological misdevelopment, are responsible for alienated labour".

The most radical of all these revisionists is Lawrence Crocker, who makes it clear in his essay on "Marx, liberty and democracy" that the good society will be a perpetual adult education class in which self-education will take the form of an all-round development of everyone's capacities. The feature of the present world which seems most to dismay Professor Crocker is the existence of status-hierarchies, and this makes him alarmed at the thought of brilliant concert pianists enjoying applause at the end of their performances, for "even a non-hierarchical status elite is a threat to a left libertarian community, because it destroys feelings of equality of worth". His ideal is one of everybody exercising skills at an equal level of competence, but he regretfully concludes that such an outcome is unlikely. His inspiration is found in a sentence from *The Communist Manifesto*: "Only in a community do the means exist for every individual to cultivate his talents in all directions." It is this vision of, as it were, self-developers gulping off in all directions at once that gives one a strong sense of unreality in talk about the good society, the objection to which can be best expressed by saying that everything we do has an opportunity cost.

It is Crocker's essay which exhibits most clearly the land-of-Cockayne charm permeating many of these essays. Leaving far behind him the problems of power and scarcity, he suggests that revolutionary leaders should retire to their ploughs when the revolution is over. "The one party that should not exist after the revolution is the party that is identified in people's minds with the revolution... Anyone perceived as a leader in the process of the revolution should retire from politics with the success of the revolution." It's a lovely thought, but what does he think the Lenins, Maos, Castros and their like are in the game for? The revolution is never finished, there's always more work to be done.

David McLellan contributes a characteristically lucid piece on "Marx and Engels on the future communist society". As he notes, Marx thought that "Hegel saw man as a disembodied consciousness and the world as necessarily inimical to man's fulfilment", a caricature of Hegel which is necessary if Marx's comments on him are to make sense. Crocker describes the position of the Praxis Marxists of Yugoslavia, who fit well into the volume because of their receptivity to liberal ideas, which they graft with dialectical flexibility on to the main stem of Marxist thought. Other essays touch on contemporary communist reality, but it is a very light touch. Loren Graham describes "the questioning of science and technology" now developing in the Soviet Union, while Paul Sweezy argues that the most important contribution Marxism made to the advance of Marxism was to break the tyranny of the Soviet model. "Postrevolutionary society contains not only contradictions inherited from millennia of a class-ridden society" but also "it produces and reproduces its own contradictions", making it all the more necessary, one thinks, as one remembers Crocker's suggestion, for the fathers of the revolution to find reasons for continuing to guide their children.

This is, then, a better than average collection of essays, usually sensible, certainly liberal, mostly well written. Yet there is something wrong with the whole project, and it is instructive to consider what it is.

A good society is clearly compatible with bad men and good men with a bad society. This is a crucial distinction, but it is never made in these essays. The reason is that the essayists have all sundered the idea of the good society from any idea of choice. A good society means, here, a society in which people characterized by a good communal nature could allow that nature to flow freely into a concrete mode of social life. There is no risk of evil, for these are special people: communal puppets controlled by the invisible strings of Marxist dogma.

They must, indeed, be very special people to enjoy living in such a society.

Blueprints for paradise

By Kenneth Minogue

JOHN P. BURKE, LAWRENCE CROCKER, LYMAN H. LEGTERS (Editors): *Marxism and the Good Society*. 225pp. Cambridge University Press. £16. 0 521 23392 5

The good society is a vision that has danced before men's eyes since well before the Greeks. But quite what sort of vision it is has seldom been agreed. For Plato, it was an illuminating intellectual construction, for Marx it would be the virtually inevitable outcome of a revolutionary process, while for many moderns, it is a blueprint to be actualized, an invitation to social engineering. But it is a constitution within which changing generations of human beings might live? Or is it a concrete way of life inhabited by people who lack only capacity for fouling things up? Again, is it one way of life on which all humans will come to agree? Or are there many versions of the good society, often with little else but their supposed goodness in common?

Some of these questions are raised in the opening essay of this collection by Richard T. de George. He is clear that the good society is a different thing from a good society, of which there could be many versions. Marx clearly believed in this vision is still "viable" and concludes that it is not, and that contemporary communists have been realistic in settling for attempting to create the conditions of a good society. By contrast, John O. Burke argues that Marx believed that a revolutionary process was a necessary furnace in which men fit to inhabit the future good society would have to be forged. His argument requires him to discount all those *obiter dicta* in which Marx and Engels said that "some countries (such as Britain and America) might advance to worker power without actually undergoing a revolution. His argument is convincing, and makes clear a point which is not otherwise prominent in these essays: that you cannot have a good society without transforming human nature; and such transformation might well be a long and bloody business.

Hence George's argument that it is better to settle for a good society than a sensible one. And in being sensible, it is typical of most of the essays in this collection, which can be described as "revisionist". In the sense that they seek to reintroduce into the Marxist ideal those characteristics of modern (capitalist) society which a liberal would recognize as being valuable. The point about George's acceptance of moral pluralism is that different people have different ideas of what would constitute a good society (as it is in fact now is) not a matter of bringing about "the good society" as if it were a blueprint to be implemented, but of finding ways to accommodate different views of our current imperfections.

Another who would conserve a treasured fragment of capitalism is Arthur Dignaturo in "Alienation and Justice in the market". His essay is a genuinely Marxist exercise in turning economics into a moral science, and its main drive is to demonstrate what a useless collection of parasites capitalist really are. His argument takes off from Joan Robinson's observation that there is an important difference between returns to capital and profits for capitalists, but it ends up taking radical thought back to about 1820, when it was the parasitism of the upper classes that most impressed the socialists of the day. Dignaturo's main concern, however, is to salvage the market, which has sometimes been thrown out with the bath-water by over-the-hill theorists. "Not the market", he tells us, "but class structure and class determined technological misdevelopment, are responsible for alienated labour".

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is the elimination of competitive-ness, the promotion of social co-operation, and the disappearance of alienation." He presumably doesn't mean that little boys in the good society would be forbidden to race each other to a winning post. One sometimes he is talking of the future, but some of the remarks in this volume suggest that Wimbledon and Ascot, Flushing Meadow and Le Mans, might well have to go as well, since they cannot help but generate those dreaded status-hierarchies. What the contributors might say on this sort of question would no doubt vary, but the level of abstraction in which they are committed by their use of Marx as the boundary fence of their reflections sometimes opens the way to absurdity.

A concern with Marxist theory entails, in a variety of ways, an evasion of evident realities. Dignaturo fur example, writes: "As far as its productive contribution is concerned, capitalism constitutes a superb class of coupon clippers that has learned to perform a useful function." No doubt definitions can be constructed to support such a view, but it leaves one wondering why it is that capitalism, after all this time, still seems to have secrets of abundance which socialist societies cannot match. But reaching a suitably Marxist conclusion is enough to dispel any inclination to pursue the matter further by querying the curious coexistence of such parasitism with abundance, or why the expropriation of these parasites is not followed by prodigies of productive advance.

Several writers quote Marx to the effect that the emergence of worker-owned cooperative factories shows that capitalists are no longer necessary. But such an argument is hardly relevant to modern conditions. If people can produce things in other ways than by capitalist enterprises, there is not the slightest reason for stopping them. The real question is: why should anyone bother to think in terms of the one true Mode of Production which must be imposed on everybody by revolution? One may not-Max Marx here by observing that goods are not produced by systems and modes but by real, living, breathing men in specific historical circumstances, etc, etc.

It is, further, by posing moral and political questions in terms of Marxist scholarship that these writers are able to avoid the difficult question of what has actually happened on the many occasions in this century when men holding these very beliefs, who are presumably men of goodwill, have actually tried putting any of this into practical effect. Both Russia and China are discussed without any concern for the connection between a passion for the good society and the high probability of a bloodbath.

At a deeper level, the whole project of "the good society" is an intellectually confused enterprise. The word "good" refers to aspects of the human will: to persons, dispositions, acts and deeds. It characterizes decisions, or what directly seems to govern decisions. But a society, or economic system, is not a decision; nor is it the outcome of a decision. In what sense could it be good? Clearly, we might approve of a society, and in that loose sense signify our approval of it by the use of the word "good". But this would have no real ethical force.

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ity. For the character of human life up till now has been the enormous variety of ideas people have entertained of what the good society might be like. For pensioners, it's weeding the rose-garden, for hell's angels, it's taking fearful risks among the motorways. Spaniards will still be waiting the bullfights that vegetarians and the enemies of bloodsports will wish to abolish. These and a thousand other disputes will have to be settled before anyone could even think of setting up the good society. But, for these essayists, it will all become possible by consent on the far side of something called a revolution.

But the problem goes even deeper than this, and it can best be elaborated if we refer to the famous passage in John Donne's seventeenth century which has often been used to state the kind of ideal to which the essayists of this work subscribe: No man is an island, and the bell that tolls tolls for us all. This has become something of a social work-ers' credo, but only because few people actually read the whole passage. Only a few lines later on Donne tells us that "... affliction is a treasure, and scarce any man hath enough of it. No man hath affliction enough that is not matured, and opened by it, and made for God by that affliction."

Now it would indeed be perverse to try to organize affliction to facilitate the moral uplift of the inhabitants of some notional good society. Life usually does that well enough for us all. But it is certainly true that there are some forms of good which only arise as we respond to afflictions, and a society imagined in which no such affliction takes place has no comprehension of this sort of good, or indeed of any kind of good, except that which is most superficially appealing. Even those afflictions which result from Acts of God are never mentioned in these magnifying. It would indeed be a different life were affliction in all its forms to be abolished. In such condition, there is no place for heroism because anything that might call forth heroism has been abolished. No envy, no gossip, no nuns, no kings, no whores plying for trade nor criminals after a fast buck. No competition nor adversity, and, what is worst of all, continual participation - and the life of man (and woman too) would be communal, affluent, nice, without stress, and long.

Men have died in their millions in pursuit of some vision of the good society. Kidnappers and bourgeois, Cuban and Cambodian, guerrilla and terrorist, and their victims. Can this be why they all went into the dark? There is something terrifying about the banality of evil, but even more terrifying would be the banality of good.

In *Contemporary Terror: Studies in Sub-State Violence* (231pp, Macmillan, £20, 0 333 27207 2), David Carlton and Carlo Schaerf have assembled papers presented at the International School on Disarmament and Research on Conflicts held in Arica, Italy, in August 1978. Among the aspects of international terrorism considered are Nuclear Violence, Chinese and Soviet Attitudes, and Hostage-Taking, together with case-studies of Federal Germany, Italy, Ulster and the IRA.

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Minute by Glass Minute

Peter Porter Collected Poems

Oxford University Press

The proliferating periphery

By J. M. Richards

ARTHUR M. EDWARDS:

The Design of Suburbia

A critical study in environmental history. 281pp. Cambridge Press Ltd., 16 Pembroke Road, London W11 3HL. £16.50. 0 52606 002 8

The only serious weakness of this otherwise excellent, wise and informative book is that it uses the word suburbia in mean too many different things. In some passages Arthur M. Edwards's suburbs are simply the fringes of towns where sporadic growth has taken place, not excluding the ribbon development one house thick along the roads leading out of towns which caused such disfigurement of the English countryside until it was curbed by the Act of 1935. In some passages he means by suburbs the by-law streets, often near the centre rather than on the fringe, with which municipalities replaced the atom, a mass of individual houses following the Public Health Act of 1875. In yet others he means the low-density housing estates that are the present century's characteristic contribution to the English pattern of living - what in fact most people mean by suburbs. These last were initially a product of the speculative house-builder, but Mr Edwards also brings into his story the post-war new towns, the sort of thing having been conceived in the 1930s, and which he says should not be suburbs in the dictionary

sense of dependencies of towns but self-contained communities.

The low-density extension of a town into the countryside, whether resulting from new forms of transport, from popular ambition to achieve more genteel or healthier living habits or from the enterprise of speculative house-builders, does not necessarily constitute a suburb in the true sense of a self-sufficient entity that provides within its boundaries all the requirements of daily life except those concerned with earning a living. Edwards's examination of suburbia would have been clearer and more constructive had he acknowledged that it has its own distinct and specialized attributes and is neither the town spread thin nor the countryside built up.

The true suburb, as distinguished from a mere tract of land given over to housing, caters for a section of the population with needs and aspirations different from those of the townsman and the countryman - needs arising from young families, the needs of the suburban dweller's attitude to leisure, to his neighbour and to the rest of the community. In fulfilling these needs the suburb evolved its own physical pattern in which the houses themselves - and Edwards is mainly concerned with housing - were not the dominating element. They were one element among many, and in the mature suburb they are barely glimpsed among an elaborate of gardens, trees and outdoor furnishings of various kinds, appearing and disappearing round corners of the winding roads.

This kind of scenic elaboration is unique to suburbia, for there the tradition of the English Picturesque landscape still has its natural home,

and its effects are created very largely by the united efforts of its inhabitants, each diligently exploiting the varied opportunities that the suburban ethos offers him. The process is as much one of chance as of design. The typical suburban scene is an accumulation of happy accidents, and it is thus misleading to speak of the ideal suburb as being designed in the sense that a square in a Georgian town or a neighbourhood in a contemporary new town were consciously designed as a preliminary to being built. There lies another anomaly in Edwards's title.

It is true that many suburbs do not display more than a hint of the richly overladen environment which those to whom neither town nor country life is perfectly suited revel in if they are fortunate; this needs time to establish and in recent decades the rule-of-thumb regulations introduced as part of the developing system of planning controls or to ease the flow of traffic, and determining road-widths and sight-lines (regulations that Edwards duly castigates), have broken open the closed-in world in which the suburban ethos once flourished. Yet although its charms may be partly lost, the picture of the suburb in its more mature form is the one those attempting to elucidate the essential quality of suburbia should always carry in their minds.

Edwards cast his net wider, and any confusion as to the proper characteristics of suburbia is fully compensated for by the breadth of his historical survey. *The Design of Suburbia* is really a history of housing policies and housing legislation since the eighteenth century, omitting only the high-density central-area housing that has been the most prominent contribution to our

cities in this generation, and the middle-class flats that were nearly as prominent a contribution of the generation before. This is a readable account, full of acute observation, into which the social and the legislative elements are skilfully woven. Edwards is very good on causes of change such as the motor-car, showing first how it influenced the spread of towns by allowing commuter traffic to develop away from the railway, and then its aesthetic influence, when it diluted the densely built-up texture of the earlier suburbs by means of the new road-patterns on which motor-traffic insisted, and for example by inserting driveways leading to garages into the previously continuous lines of hedges that bordered the roads and enclosed the secluded gardens.

He is also good on administrative influences - especially the negative: the impossible wide range of talents demanded of the local authority surveyors who were placed in such a powerful position as a consequence of the Act of 1875, and the abdication by the architectural profession from all responsibility for suburban housing after the RIBA's new Code of Practice in 1920 forbade architects to be involved in housing finance as they had effectively been since early in the nineteenth century.

Edwards's more revealing passages also on social history, in which he analyses, for example, the snobbery that made semi-detached houses preferable to terraces because of the latter's association with working-class housing. In spite of the fact that the upper classes in Belgium and the Bloomsbury squares lived in terraces, he also notes the significant class differences between the London omnibus, which

in its early days was essentially a middle-class conveyance (it did not start operating until eight in the morning, by which time the lower classes were at work) and the tram, which was the working-class vehicle. West End property interests managed to keep trams out of the centre until they reached it below ground by way of the Kingsway tunnel early in the twentieth century. Even outside the centre trams were mostly confined to the working-class suburbs.

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Doctrines of diplomacy

By D. C. Watt

ALEXANDER DE CONDE (Editor):
Encyclopaedia of American Foreign
Policy
Studies of the Principal Movements
and Ideas
3 volumes, 1,300pp. New York:
Scribner
0 684 15503 6

JOHN E. FINDLING:
Dictionary of American Diplomatic
History
622pp. Greenwood Press. £29.95.
0 313 22029 5

The Encyclopaedia of American Foreign Policy is a huge work of American scholarship which represents, at least in part, a collective manifesto. The editor, Professor de Conde, has chosen not to identify his contributors by age, professional status, or discipline. With a few exceptions, however, the authors belong to the younger school of historians of American foreign policy who came to the fore in the 1960s as critics of the hitherto dominant liberal Democratic tradition. The influence of Professor William Appleman Williams of Wisconsin is encountered at many turns. Four of the authors have actually served as US diplomats. Edward Bennett who writes on "colonialism" and "mandates" rather than on the Euro-American economic diplomacy of the early 1930s, on which he is the unquestioned master, and Lyman Kirkpatrick being the most noticeable. Dorothy Borg is not among the contributors. There are some odd inclusions. Reading Professor Seabury on "Realism and idealism" one is inclined to ask what he is doing in such company, remembering his robust stand on intervention in Vietnam in the 1960s, and his role in organizing "Democrats for Nixon" movement in 1972 out of dismay at the nomination of Senator McGovern as the Democratic candidate for the Presidency. I can only identify two non-American contributors: Professor A.E. Campbell of Birmingham University (in graduate of the British diplomatic service) contributes a perceptive piece on "The Balance of Power", and Professor Jacques Dursoelle of the Sorbonne, whose own history of American foreign policy caused such controversy in the United States a few years ago, in a brilliant study of "Treaties" shows how the unique nature of the treaty-making power in America by comparison with the traditional European system has contributed enormously to the monarcho-imperial role of the President in world politics.

It takes a massive publication like this to bring home the enormous part played by doctrine in both the practice and the teaching of the history of American foreign policy. Indeed it raises in an acute form the questions how far the latter is actually responsible for the former, and how far our perceptions of the role of doctrine in the conduct of US foreign relations lead us to view historical events only in doctrinal terms. The contents list reveals the emotional and persuasive pull of the concept of doctrine: Monroe, Truman, Eisenhower and Nixon all claimed to have pronounced "doctrines"; Woodrow Wilson has his "Fourteen Points"; General Marshall and Henry Morgenthau have their "plans"; "Militarism" and the "Military-Industrial Complex" are listed but not "Navalism", only "Naval Diplomacy" (a clear and dispassionate piece by William Brasted, doyen of historians of the US Navy). Other "isms" are "Colonialism" (but not surprisingly, "Anti-Colonialism"), "Elitism", "Imperialism" and "Internationalism" (of course), "Isolationism", "Nationalism", "Nationalism", "Pacifism", "Realism" and "Idealism" and "Nationalism".

The editor justifies the approach, not by arguing the need for such concepts; indeed, on this point it is clearly never occurred to him to ask how far the makers of foreign policy are guided by them and how they come to have these concepts, or whether they serve merely as elements of persuasion in winning public, electoral or Congressional support for a particular set of actions or initiatives. Professor de Conde follows conventional wisdom in de-crying diplomatic history as the study of the exercise of power in official relations between countries, through the examination of official and personal papers. It is, he says, "often narrow in focus" even when well done. His contributors, by contrast, "roam beyond areas of conventional scholarship" to study wider issues.

Passing over this image of the diplomatic historian as the hard-working dryasdust, by contrast with the hang-gliderman of Professor de Conde's stable (and resisting the temptation to dismiss the approach of the latter as requiring much less application, command of languages and knowledge of cultures other than those of the United States, much less grind and much less contact with, or need to understand, the minds and personalities of the actors), it is worth reflecting on why the study of American foreign policy has developed in this particular direction, when forty years ago the United States was the home of some of the world's leading diplomatic historians, men like Langer, Fay, Bernadotte Schmitt, Ray Sontag, and so on.

The first part of an answer must be that these were historians of European diplomacy whose work derived from the great outburst of historical examination of the origins and precedents of the war of 1914-18. Few did more than touch on American history even when, as in the case of Theodore Roosevelt and the first Moroccan crisis, American diplomacy was crucial to their story. Historians of American foreign policy followed the great Samuel Bemis of Yale, whose approach to the discipline was rooted in a nationalist consciousness of the superiority of the American ethos. But where they worked increasingly in twentieth-century fields, they were until the late 1960s borrowed from all but American archives and, if the truth be told, often too ill-equipped linguistically to make use of such foreign sources as were available. It was not until the 1950s that any historian of American neutrality during the First World War thought to look at the record of the Reichstag inquiry into the causes of Germany's defeat, which had been available since the mid-1920s. The Spanish papers on the Spanish-American War remained closed until Professor May of Harvard, that same historian who had first looked at American neutrality through German sources, discovered them in the 1960s, thick with dust and still tied in the original tape with which they had been consigned to the archives sixty years before. Before the 1967 Public Records Act in Britain, researchers into the Anglo-American rapprochement of the 1910s had to wait fifty years before the British version of events could be studied, at a time when American papers were open up to the end of the 1930s, and in many cases beyond.

In these circumstances writing the history of American diplomacy after

A Home Movie

The radio is the soundtrack for her life.
—incessant, uncontrollable, popular—
her days alone in a room with running water,
punctuated by trips to the bathroom...

Sometimes her black clothes soak in the bath,
then a counterpane wears them for a few days,
then it is her turn again. These are the colours
she prefers. She likes to stuff herself in them,
sunglasses in the corridor like an army colonel,
the strong smells of lotion and deodorant,
loud music on the radio... She exists somewhere
in the shadows of these frontiers, fugitive and minimal.

Her room is all white, walls, rugs, furniture.
She owns a white portable television set,
and stares into its depths like a flunkunk.
The sound of its dramas leaks through the walls...

Michael Hofmann

1914 was impossible over most of the field and not practised even where it was possible. Historians of American foreign policy, bound by the constitutional processes, and beguiled by the conventions of American political rhetoric, concentrated on Congress, on pressure groups, on ethnic minorities, and, following a trend in American society long ago identified by Charles Beard as the "devil factor in American history", began to identify influences which were regarded as illegitimate. And, being barred from (and professionally booted by) the detailed detective work which underlies all great diplomatic historiography, they turned away from the personalities, the decisions, the moral choices, and the whole actual living world within which international relations are conducted, towards "ideas" and "concepts" — if they did not abandon history entirely (as does of them did) for a similarly nono-cultural approach to political science. As a result, one could for years scan American writing on foreign policy in vain for answers to questions such as "Did it work?" and "What did they want to happen?", "How good was their information and intelligence?", "How did they perceive the countries and societies with which they were dealing?" Such questions were simply not being asked — let alone answered.

The William Appleman Williams school observed carefully that American rhetoric and American practice did not always coincide, a discovery which drove all of them some of the time, and some of them all of the time, into a discussion of American "goals" in terms more suited to the analysis of religious heresy than his-torical explanation. The discovery that it is in the nature of "foreign policy" — a collective noun covering the day-to-day catalogue of decisions, initiatives, actions and in-actions, which are the only observable and tangible manifestations of America's relations (whether official or unofficial) with other countries — that it can only be conducted by a comparatively small, identifiable and usually appointed "elite" of career officials and elected politicians, threw them badly. Their concept of American derived from Rousseau. In their view, American actions in the world ought to be the product of a Usonian (to use Frank Lloyd Wright's term for twentieth-century Americans) *volonté générale*. Since clearly was not, something fishy, something sinister, something very wrong was going on. Economic or business interests were at work; or militarists; or the military-industrial complex. Whatever it was, America's foreign policy was not being made by "the people".

One cannot help feeling that, at least where the younger men were concerned, there was altogether too much Frankfurt School and too little *Wiener Kreis* in their cosmos. Instead of the a priori sociological formulations of Horkheimer, Adorno or Marcuse, what they needed was a serious Wittgensteinian look at the language and the definitions they



Policeman and window-shopper outside Saks Fifth Avenue, Easter Sunday, 1948: reproduced in Ruth Orkin's A Photo Journal (for publication details see the caption on p. 1386). Ms Orkin's autobiographical record ranges from Hollywood to Israel, and her subjects from Burgess Meredith in 1937 to the return to New York of the Tehran hostages early this year.

had been taking for granted. And they still need this, many of them. Many of the concepts analysed in this encyclopaedia, for instance, are irretrievably culture-bound. The essay on "Elitism", for example, is not devoted to a study of the social origins, culture, presumptions and suppositions of the various groups that have worked on one another to produce what Russian, British, Japanese or Indonesian diplomats (or journalists) would encounter as examples of American foreign policy. It is an account of the search for "illegitimate" influences, such as that of the armaments manufacturers who allegedly took America into the 1914-18 War. There is no entry on "Democracy" or "Populism", or whatever is the favoured converse to the unacceptable (to the author and presumably to the editor) concept of "Elitism". Nor is there any serious study of the decision-making process in action. Indeed, despite James Rosenau's dismissal of the "billiard-ball" model of world politics as "no longer an appropriate description of world politics", many of the authors clearly have never questioned it; though their interest is entirely in the composition of that ball that carries the sins and stripes. They are not so much historians of American foreign policy as historians of the role of foreign-policy issues in American politics.

The matter is of more moment to the contemporary world than a purely academic wrangle, over what should be studied, and how, in the history of American relations with a non-American world. Professor Ernest May of Harvard (who is among those conspicuous by his absence) wrote several years ago an impassioned attack on the unhistorical nature of those conceptions of the "lessons of history" to which appeal was constantly being made by American policy-makers. It is at least possible to contend that the practice of teaching the history of American foreign policy as though it were any more than a set of intellectual abstractions from an inadequately studied multiplicity of phenomena, actions, inactions, transactions and interactions, has been misleading, both to those who make policy and to those in whose name it is made, and has had much to do with the weaknesses and failures of American policy in recent years.

It is sad to have to end on such a

Culture before Calvinism

by Larzer Ziff

ANDREW DELBANCO:
William Ellery Channing
An Essay on the Liberal Spirit in
America
203pp. Harvard University Press. £9.
0 674 95335 5

The intellectual history of America from the middle of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century is frequently represented as a drama in which the followers of Jonathan Edwards play the heroes' roles. Their invincible weapon is the philosophy of Locke and Newton to Calvin. With it they reduce liberal views of free will to nonsense, expose genteel opposition to emotional religion as impiety, and demonstrate that the mere doing of one's duty to one's fellows is hypocrisy. In this version of intellectual history, the New Light Calvinists did more to prepare the public mind for the revolution against Britain than did their theological opponents, liberals who were apt to dither on the shores of compromise. Finally, the Edwardsians are credited with defining the major American intellectual tradition, so that when romanticism emerges in the nineteenth century, it is Edwards who is to be identified as the true sire of Emerson rather than any proponent of the liberal, rational tradition established after his death in 1758.

This version certainly has its appeal. Emerson did not clearly see his way to the transcendentalism of *Nature* (1836) until after he had resigned his Unitarian pastorate and freed himself of that creed's constraints on the emotions. In strict Edwardian terms his insistence on the perpetual presence of miracle may be heretical, but compared with the Unitarian position that admitted both miraculous religion for the benighted of biblical times and reasonable religion for the enlightened, modern era, Emerson's romantic fervour seems spiritually close to Edwards's piety. His doctrine of the reason's control of the understanding, too, is philosophically akin to Edwards's doctrine of the priority of the mind's disposition to the prompting of the understanding. And for all the depersonalization of the deity that follows from conceiving it as an

oversoul, Emerson's intense attachment to it as the source of power seems more compatible with Edwards's vision of an angry god with fiery eyes and a tangled beard than it does with the Unitarian image of a clean-shaven deity dressed in the starched white bands of a Boston clergyman.

All of which is to say that in our day, chiefly because of the work of Perry Miller, the liberal tradition and its great exponent, William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), have been diverted from the mainstream to the backwaters of American thought. Time was — Channing's own time, for example, or the radical years of the 1920s — when the liberal religious outlook represented by this most eloquent of Unitarian leaders was seen as central to the moving spirit of America: from Jefferson through Channing to Emerson ran the national respect for human dignity. Vao Wyck Brooks, looking at what he was to call "the flowering of New England", saw Channing as the "great awakener". But in the wake of Perry Miller and his school we are less apt to remember the strong grip that Channing took on the young Emerson's mind than the words of the mature Emerson: "Once Dr Channing filled our sky. Now we become so conscious of his limits and of the difficulty attending any effort to show him our point of view that we doubt if it be worth while". After saying which, to a paradigm of a radical's attitude toward the liberal mentor he has outpaced, Emerson adds, "Best amputate".

In the preface to his debt *William Ellery Channing*, Andrew Delbanco says that his hope "is to help restore Channing to the canon of American literature". Delbanco thus reminds us that Channing, in his day, had as wide a reputation as a literary essayist quite apart from his fame as a religious leader. His essays on Fénelon, Milton, Napoleon, and a national literature in America, led English critics to rate him with Irving and Cooper as among America's leading men of letters. Since Channing's reputation today rests largely on a handful of religious pieces, Delbanco's discussion of his all but forgotten literary output is all the more illuminating. However, in the end he wisely does not base his hopes for restoring Channing's reputation on these

literary activities; time has not been cruel in dropping Channing from the company of Irving and Cooper.

Nor does Delbanco attempt to reinstate Channing by asserting the value of his tradition as opposed to the more rigorous intellectual tradition of Jonathan Edwards. Indeed, he makes clear that he is an heir of the Miller school and is indebted above all to Miller's gifted disciple Alan Heimert for his own impetus. Thus Channing's reputation is to be restored, not by stressing the soundness of his arguments against his Edwardian opponents, but by showing that at one crucial point in his career he behaved in a manner that can be related to the Edwards tradition. For Delbanco, this occurred when Channing sacrificed material comfort and hazarded his reputa-



William Ellery Channing

tion by siding with the anti-slavery faction in the 1830s. Later, abolitionism was to acquire some kind of radical chic, but in the 1830s it was a creed for the scruffy supporters of universal reform, grain diets, communal living, or cold baths. The patriotic leader of New England's "established" religion was an odd associate for such zealots, and initially they were as startled by his defection from the social standard of his comfortable parishioners as were those parishioners themselves. Channing's pamphlet, *Slavery* (1835), and his subsequent anti-slavery activity seemed to mark a strong break with the tradition in which he had been

raised and which his mature talents had served to advance.

That tradition was the Federalist tradition of the powerful, beneficent partnership of the preaching of the Bible and the pleading of the civil law. Great lawyers, such as John Adams, who had taken up their profession only after considering the almost equal opportunities for political influence to be found in the pulpit, offered as a necessary accompaniment to their interpretation of the American constitution a version of American history as divine history. In parallel, Channing saw constitutional law as a necessary complement to his interpretation of the Bible. In the sermon that in 1819 won him recognition as the leader of the liberals, he said that, in opposing materialism, "We reason about the Bible precisely as civilians do about the constitution under which we live; who, you know, are accustomed to limit one provision of that venerable instrument by others, and to fix the precise import of its parts by inquiring into its general spirit, into the prevalent feelings, impressions, and circumstances of the time when it was framed".

In the ensuing wars with the Edwardsians, Channing's ultimate argument was directed at what he called Calvinism's immorality in leading men to distrust the "calm, deliberate, and distinct decisions of our rational and moral powers". From his partisan viewpoint the success of the young republic was threatened more by anarchy than by a leadership of the moral and intellectual best. Accordingly, he removed pride from its cardinal place among the sins and substituted distrust of the mind: "The worst error in religion, after all, is that of the sceptic, who records triumphantly the weakness and wanderings of the human intellect and maintains that no trust is due to the decision of the erring reason... The history of the church proves that men may trust their faculties too little as well as too much".

It is not this Channing, however, whom Delbanco singles out for rehabilitation, but the Channing of the anti-slavery cause who followed his celebrated 1835 pamphlet by interceding with the Boston city commissioners to withdraw their opposition to the use of Faneuil Hall by the

abolitionists for a memorial meeting for one of their martyrs, and who in 1840 was himself denied the use of his own church by his parishioners when he sought to hold a memorial service for a leading abolitionist colleague. Channing avoided resigning, despite such disagreements with a congregation he had served with the greatest distinction for more than thirty-five years, by a characteristic compromise: he remained the minister of the Federal Street Church but refused to continue to accept his salary. This is typical of his resolute but unromantic temperament and is paralleled in his theology by similar compromises, such as his complete acceptance of biblical miracles but firm insistence that the Bible be read critically. Logically vulnerable if not downright indefensible as his position in such matters may have been, he was at the same time morally successful if not downright triumphant.

But Delbanco's endorsement of Channing as a figure worthy of our attention only when he takes his stand against slavery is not so much moral as intellectual in inspiration. In confronting the evil of slavery, Delbanco says, Channing had come to know "Satan's limitless capacity to dissemble". And so, in his last years, the great opponent of Edwards's teachings "finally met, and restated the central demand of Edwards, that a man must combat evil while never ceasing to combat himself". Given Delbanco's view of intellectual history, this conclusion makes sense, but what a price Channing is made to pay for his rehabilitation! The major achievements of his career — his advocacy of rational, moral religion and his warning of the harsh New England cultural climate to a temperance that would sustain literary life — are represented as weak because "intellectually inconsistent when compared with the thinking of even third-rate Calvinist contemporaries. And his splendid moral mind is seen as splendid only after it is read as a belated recognition of the force of Edwards's Satan rather than as the courageous action of a man who not only preached the honour due to all men but also acted upon this teaching."

Another way to rehabilitate Channing might be to proceed from a dialectical sense of history and to see

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complexes such as the Puritan notion of evil as processes rather than things. From such a viewpoint, Channing may be observed to be combating evil not merely in the form of slavery and its upholders but in the form, among others, of the Calvinists' distrust of the questioning mind and their imputation of Satanic inspiration to it. If Channing's logical chain appears mishapen compared with the symmetrical links of the Calvinists, it may be because it was put to the task of yoking together religion and the growth of human culture rather than holding them apart. Channing wanted to foster a deeper and subtler taste than that which rested content with the incidents in a temperance tale, the melodies of a harmonium, and the black lines of a wood-cut of Washington crossing the Delaware. His liberal theology embraced cultural ends just as Matthew Arnold's cultural ideology embraced theological ends. Channing, too, opposed Philistinism, not just as a sin against good breeding but as a sin against humanity. He opposed a dogma which taught the Philistines that cultural grace meant spiritual gracelessness.

Delbanco characterizes excellently the eighteenth-century restraint with which Channing refused to advance into the transcendental merging of soul and nature in the over-soul. Indeed, for him this represented a threat to culture of equal force although different from that of the Calvinists. Like polar opposites, the monisms of Transcendentalism and Calvinism resembled each other more closely than either did Channing's temperate zone of dualism. So Emerson amputated Channing and can be called Edwards's heir. But Channing not Edwards to whom Emerson owes the greater debt. If Emerson resembles Edwards it is because of Channing's cultural victory over

the Edwardseans which permitted him to mature in a world that promoted the leap of his imagination. Had the Moses and the Beechers rather than Channing set the tone of New England, Emerson would have had to do Channing's work of liberating the rational and moral faculties rather than be empowered to employ them in outdistancing Channing.

If I contest Delbanco's view of history, I have great admiration for his analytic strength. Given an intellectual construct, he, like the best intellectual historians in the tradition he accepts, can open it, examine its parts, determine their connections with one another, and resynthesize the whole with skill and sophistication. His discussion of Channing's turning towards man in relation to his turning away from nature, or of Channing the individualist who is wary of the individual, is subtle, clear, and exciting. He is a shrewd observer and a deft dissection.



This coloured lithograph (1918) by Gabriele Münter (1877-1962) is included in a volume of *Modern Prints and Illustrated Books to be held at Christie's, 8 King Street, London SW1 on Wednesday December 2. The sale also includes works by Munch, Morandi, Kandinsky, Hockney, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Picasso and Rauschenberg.*

Instruments in interaction

By Elting E. Morison

THOMAS C. COCHRAN:

Frontiers of Change
Early Industrialism in America
179pp, Oxford University Press, £8.95.
0 19 502875 9

For a long time what every well-instructed American schoolboy could know about the industrial development of his country from 1800 to 1860 was not much — Eli Whitney and interchangeable parts, the Erie Canal, the coming of the Iron Horse, Cincinnati as Porkopolis and the literary attainments of the female operatives in the mills at Lowell. It was a meagre inventory, but it was enough.

How the fathers made things and distributed their goods and services was not taken to be a part of polite learning. (What, as Matthew Arnold asked, have coal, iron and railroads to do with sweetness and light?) Nor was the study of the subject a seemly scholarly pursuit. Besides, the evidence needed for such study was scattered, fragmentary, unreliable and hard to come by. So, for 125 years after Tocqueville had observed that the way to power in American society was through "productive industry", little attention was paid to the history of industrial production.

In recent years this situation has begun to change. For about a quarter of a century there has been a steady increase in the scholarly exploration of this unfamiliar historical terrain. Starting, as in any new field, with the identification and description of particulars — a tool, a company, a technical procedure — investigations have gradually moved into wider areas of study: market structures, the diffusion of steam power, capital formation, management practices, and so forth. As a result a good deal is now known about the constituent elements, surprising in their number and variety, that contributed to the building of what is now often called the infra-structure of the United States in the early days.

One of the first men to enter this new field was Thomas C. Cochran. Starting thirty years ago with the history of a brewing company, he has since moved through many rewarding areas — railroads, the movement of technical ideas, managerial personalities and, his dominant concern, American business systems. By the variety of his interests he has laid out many new paths for others to follow, and in the sustained quality of his work — painstaking, but resourceful — he has established a standard for all to repair to.

Now, in this small book, *Frontiers of Change*, he seeks to describe how things look from the emicenece he has attained. In the first place, Cochran has assembled the evidence required by his new view of American business systems. He has done this by a method which is every bit as new as the view itself. He has taken the old, the familiar, the well-known, and has made it new by his selection, his arrangement, his interpretation. He has made it new by his selection, his arrangement, his interpretation. He has made it new by his selection, his arrangement, his interpretation.

corporate structures to lines of credit and the founding of libraries where mechanics could read about the instruments they were working with.

Some topics are viewed from refreshingly new perspectives — for example, machine tools as the foundation of industrial advance or the persistence of the idea of a fully automated factory — and some interesting modifications are made in the received tradition. Those celebrated mills along the Merrimack and Blackstone, for instance, exerted less influence on the changing scheme of things than did the metal-working establishments on the line that ran from Troy, NY, through Philadelphia to Wilmington, Delaware.

The most important contribution of this book, taken as a work of history, is not, however, the identification, description, and assessment of the diverse parts, instructive as this is, but the author's demonstration of how, in their continuing interaction, they generated a productive capacity that by 1860 astonished the world. It is like feeling for an evolving process that distinguishes these pages. Even an "early industrialism" becomes obvious, develops many of the essential characteristics displayed in the operation of later, more "sophisticated" technological systems.

For this brief, authoritative summary all of Cochran's colleagues in history must be grateful. He aims, however, at a good deal more than a solid historical account. The book, he says in his introduction, has "far broader implications" than a simple account suggests, and it seems clear that his purpose is to relate these implications to current conditions. In his opening sentence he observes that "the rulers of Saudi Arabia and numerous other men responsible for the development of nations must have to know the critical factors" in the astonishing growth of early American industrialism.

In his thoughtful exposition Cochran does much to gratify this craving by distinguishing the critical factors. But he has also done at least as much to show that knowledge of these factors is not in itself sufficient to produce a nice ordering of industrial development. In their constant interaction they often produce unexpected results. The discovery of new coal-fields or the introduction of a new invention may alter the shape of the whole system or change what men had in mind to do. This makes it difficult to maintain firm direction over the process. As Cochran says in a telling sentence, "the period from 1840 to the mid-fifties appears to be one in which American business was groping for new forms to fit new problems and turning out to be slow and fumbling in finding them". The fact is that the impressive growth he describes seems far more the product of evolutionary, accommodation among diverse parts than of some preconceived and elegantly executed grand design. And the further fact is that, such is the lack of equilibrium in any technological system, that this will always be the case. It is a useful and sobering implication that may be, therefore, more responsible for the development of modern nations.

This is not to say, as some "technological determinists" do, that such systems are responsive only to their own path. Indeed, Cochran is at great pains to demonstrate that the arrangement of the machinery and the course of its development are subject to external pressures of various kinds. To make his point he cites the fact that at the end of the eighteenth century the United States and the countries of Western Europe possessed much the same resources in primo movers, hardware and technical knowledge; yet American industrial growth differed dramatically from that of Europe. The cause, he suggests, lay in the peculiar nature of the external pressures to which American technology was subjected, what he calls the geo-cultural influence. Equal as important as an enormous virgin territory, with its natural resources, was a set of cultural attitudes: respect for the immediately useful, delight in the new departure, commitment to movement not only across the face of the land but in society, willingness to forego quality in the interests of quantity, the assumption that since all men were created equal they had an equal claim to the goods and services produced.

Cochran returns again and again to a consideration of how these cultural assumptions acted to give a particular shape and direction to industrial development, and in so doing suggests some things about the general interplay of technical and cultural energy that those concerned with the growth of modern nations might wish to ponder. For instance, the transfer of machines from one country to another may seem a simple technical transaction. But these machines shaped by the attitudes peculiar to one society, may not fit so easily as has often been assumed into the quite different structure of another society. Such an exchange can in fact produce not so much industrial progress as cultural turmoil — as the case of Iran, for one, suggests.

There is another large consideration implicit in these pages. The machines with which Cochran deals were simple, and they made, on the whole, familiar things like cloth, shoes and iron stoves. The cultural values governing the organization of these machines were also simple and generally agreed: an increase in the production and distribution of familiar things accelerated the progress of mankind. Today, machines which are no longer simple can do almost anything. And today, the cultural intention — the ends that all this new and powerful instrumentation are designed to serve — is not very well defined or generally agreed. So there is a good deal of confusion in the technological environment and it will not be cleared away, the implication is, so much by technical advance as by further cultural clarification — new definitions of how to use the machinery and, more especially, what to use it for. The only way people can do almost anything, the message seems to be, is first to reach a collective agreement on how they wish to organize themselves.

Information, please

Thomas George Fonnereau (1789-1850): lawyer, architectural dilettante, writer on parliamentary reform and author of *Diary of a Dilettante* (1849); further information sought for an edition of his journal of a tour in Italy, 1838-39.

Pieter van der Merwe.
4 Circus Street, Greenwich, London SE10.

Leaders of fashion, 1870-1929: whereabouts of archives, correspondence, and personal papers of writers, designers, and other fashion leaders of the period, eg Mrs Eric Pritchard, Lucille, Mary Eliza Haweis, Redfern, Poquin, Poiret; for a study of fashion and feminine beauty in England and France.

Variora Steele.
Clare Hall, Cambridge CB3 9AL.

Edward Lear (1812-1895): whereabouts of drawings, paintings or watercolours of Crete, or dated April-May, 1864; for an edition of his Cretan Journal.

Rowena Fowler.
University of Bristol, Department of Extra-Mural Studies, 32 Tyndall's Park Road, Bristol BS8 1HR.

J. B. Lightfoot, Bishop of Durham (1878-89): whereabouts of any letters to members of Lightfoot's "Auckland Brotherhood" for a study of his Durham episcopate.

B. S. Benedikt.
University of Birmingham, University Library, PO Box 363, Birmingham B15 2TT.

Mino Loy (1882-1966): poet and painter, author of *Luzifer Baedeker* (1923); any recollections, letters, manuscripts, photographs, or information on the whereabouts of her paintings; for an authorized biography.

Carolyn Burko.
322 Walnut Avenue, Santa Cruz, California 95060.

In the forthcoming Oxford English Texts edition of Robert Browning's *Poetical Works*.
Margaret Smith.
33 Wheats Avenue, Birmingham B17 0RH.

George Orwell: information sought from archives, libraries or private owners who have acquired since 1968 any letters by George Orwell; for a revised edition of the *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*.

Ian Angus.
20 Church Row, London NW3.

Sir Charles Thomas-Stanford (1858-1932): Author, bibliophile, sometime Mayor and MP for Brighton friend of Cecil Rhodes; any letters, documents, anecdotes, or diaries containing references to Sir Charles, his house, Preston Manor, Brighton, or to his wife, Ellen; material or photographs relating to the development of the Stanford Estate in Brighton, and reminiscences of life at Preston Manor especially welcome.

David Beever.
Preston Manor, Brighton BN1 6SD.

Victorian "penny readings" for the edification of the Working Classes: details of place and content of performances, and information which might help in tracing their origins.

Kathleen Adams.
71, Stepping Stones Road, Coventry CV5 8JT.

Serge Voronoff (1866-1951): French-Russian surgeon and advocate of monkey-gland transplants for rejuvenation; personal reminiscences, press cuttings or papers sought; for a biography.

David Hamilton.
Department of Surgery, Western Infirmary, Glasgow W2.

Pre-1800 Williamsburg, Virginia, imprint: information sought of any such imprints owned by private collectors and libraries in the United Kingdom; for a checklist.

Susan Strome.
Research Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Box C, Williamsburg, Virginia 23185.

POETRY

DONALD DAVIE (Editor):
The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse
319pp, Oxford University Press, £7.95.
0 19 213426 4

The Oxford anthologies seem to claim a certain authority. Sometimes the authority is much more than a matter of seeming, as in Dame Helen Gardner's triumphant *New Oxford Book of English Verse*. Each book will up to a point reflect the tastes peculiar to its editor, but it aspires to represent more than this, to tell us about the condition of taste among educated readers of a given time. We might almost say that while a primary function of the books is to give pleasure, their other use and function are to give some kind of guidance. Further, the appearance of a new collection, in this case a successor to David Cecil's *Oxford Book of Christian Verse* of forty years ago, may be taken as a sign that enough has changed to warrant a new book rather than a reprint or a modest revision.

Almost one hundred years ago, in 1883, Regan Paul published *English Sacred Lyrics*, a collection of 132 poems, beginning with Anne Askew's "Lines in Prison" and ending with Adelaide Anne Proctor's "Per Pacem ad Lucem". In the poems drawn from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there is a remarkable agreement with Donald Davie in the authors chosen (not always, of course, in the individual poems), on indication of some central continuity of judgment: in the seventeenth century, for both the anonymous editor(s) of *English Sacred Lyrics* and Davie, the giants are Donne, Herbert, Milton and Vaughan; and in the eighteenth century Watts, Charles Wesley, and Cowper. Davie begins much earlier, with a translation of "The Dream of the Rood"; and in his nineteenth-century choices he doesn't include poets such as Emily Bronte, George Eliot, and Clough, whose lyrics may properly be called sacred, but are not in even a relaxed sense Christian. And Davie gives us a fair number of poems written in the last hundred years. The determination to go back to the roots of our vernacular, even if doing so involves the awkwardness of translation, belongs to the spirit of our time. And some nineteenth-century poets who in 1883 were thought, even by those who hailed the work of George Herbert and Charles Wesley, to have little to do with the sacred, are now seen more to be dead beyond all possibility of literary resurrection. The change in our view of the nineteenth century — whatever we may think of Davie's individual choices — is an established thing.

Davie discusses very fairly the difficulties of his enterprise, the elusiveness of criteria of choice, the inevitable subjectivity of the editor of such a collection, and tries to justify the principles he claims to have governed his choices.

First, he points to the obvious difficulty: that most verse written in English up to the end of the eighteenth century is written by men and women

who are in some not too indefinite sense Christians. This means adopting a somewhat narrow pseudo-category of Christian verse, something that is in effect devotional verse.

Then, since a vast amount of devotional verse has always been written, we need some way of sorting out what is worth considering for inclusion, and, Davie tells us,

I have in my mind abandoned the carefully neutral word "verse" for the more exalted word "poetry". I have tried not to include any verse that is not also poetry, in a rather exacting sense. And this partly explains why, though I have taken a wider range than my predecessor both in space and time, I have found myself including considerably fewer poems than he did.

Again, he eschews mere religiosity, no matter how fine the poem. The verses chosen are to be Christian in content and in standpoint. By this criterion the religious poetry of Yeats, and such poems as Larkin's "Church Going", Graves's "Angry Samsen", Hardy's "The Oxen", are excluded.

Finally, he considers, given that a particular poem is chosen, what text he ought to print. This question is inescapable in a collection that necessarily includes much verse that has been and even now is sung in public worship. In such verses many changes have occurred over time, some because a given phrase is hard to sing to the tune to which it is set, some for doctrinal reasons, some are bowdlerizations (not all bowdlerizations have to do with sexual matters), some, no doubt, are consequences of mistakes in copying or of slavish copying. At any rate, in many hymn-books, at least where the editors are scrupulous, no note is more frequent than (say) "F.W. Faber, *alt.*". On all this Davie is inconsistent, arguing that some established changes in congregational preference represent a kind of folk authorship which ought to be respected, or not overruled too imperiously, but at times he restores, and we must be grateful, the original text. In Isaac Watts's "When I survey the wondrous cross" he brings back the radiant second line to its original brightness — "Where the young Prince of Glory died", and gives us back the magnificent fourth verse ("His dying crimson like a robe / Spreads o'er his body on the Tree") too often cut out by squeamish editors.

One question Davie doesn't put and answer, either in his introduction or by implication in his practice, is what to do about paraphrase or translation. He allows translation in the cases of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English poetry; and since he uses the Scottish Psalter and other translations and paraphrases of Scripture, he allows translation and paraphrases of translations. But, to my mind inconsistently, he chooses to neglect that great age of translation, the nineteenth century. John Mason Neale and Edward Caswall, Thomas Carlyle ("E'en fete Burg") and Catherine Winkworth, were translators who made good poems out of the original texts; it is through them that English congregations fed themselves upon Ambrose

and Prudentius, on the hymns of the Byzantine liturgies, on the office hymns of the Breviary, on the eucharistic hymns of Saint Thomas Aquinas, on the Lutheran and Pietistic traditions of the Germanic countries. Davie's omission of these treasures robs the nineteenth-century group of many good things he ought to have printed. It is an irony that he includes one poem by Neale (not a translation), a remarkably silly poem that belongs in some of its opening lines to the world of *The Ingoldsby Legends*.

On the whole, I think the new book is by no means an improvement on its predecessor and is in some ways too idiosyncratic for its role. Some omissions (and some inclusions) are startling. Consider the following omissions: "Yet if His Majesty our sovereign lord", "The Lyke-Wake Dirge", Phineas Fletcher's "Drops, drop, slow tears", Cowin's translation of the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and perhaps the noblest thing in the Scottish Psalter — "Now Israel may say, and that truly". We are given Ken's evening hymn but not "Awake, my soul, and with the sun", Campion is here, but it is "To Music bent is my retired Mind", not the glorious "Never weather-beaten Sails more willingly bent to shore".

The nineteenth-century selection is very strange. There is no Palmer, no Isaac Williams, no Faber. Blake is represented only by "Jerusalem", a hoffing choice. Christina Rossetti is represented by only two poems (Emily Dickinson has eighteen), neither in my view a good specimen of her work (we are not given "In the bleak midwinter"). Francis Thompson is represented by "The Kingdom of God"; I think Davie should have stoked everything on "The Hound of Heaven". We are given two mediocre but well-known hymns by H. F. Lyke — each is a plain breach of the undertaking to give us nothing that is not poetry "in a rather exacting sense", as is the inclusion of "Eternal Father, strong to save", justly popular hymn us this may be.

The strangest inclusion is that of Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence". Davie knows that it is seldom or never considered "Christian". His ground for thinking otherwise is that we have overlooked the fourteenth stanza "where the old man who inspires in the poet an unforeseen and unprecedented resolution... seems plainly identified as a Scottish Presbyterian". It is true that the manner of speech described is "a stately speech"; such as grave livers do in Scotland use; / Religious men, who give to God and man their dues". But there is not the slightest trace in what he says or does of anything distinctively Presbyterian or even Christian; he gathers leeches, endures hardships, wanders from pond to pond and moor to moor, and finds a home "with God's good help, by choice or chance" (alternatives no keen-witted Calvinist would accept). He has the virtue of perseverance, but it is in looking for the dwindling stock of leeches. The effect upon Wordsworth is that exercised by other simple doers of the landscape and by such natural objects as trees, hills and bodies of water. We may say that the interchanges between Wordsworth and such visionary ob-

Devoutly distinguished

By J. M. Cameron

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jects are religious in their tone and moral in the effect described. That they are Christian in their implication seems doubtful, though of course they don't imply the falseness of Christianity.

Some of Davie's selections from twentieth-century work are also bizarre, and some of his omissions are astonishing. Clifford Bax's "Turn Back, O man, forswear thy foolish ways" is simply embarrassing as is a piece of anonymous doggerel called "The Heavenly Aeroplane". But consider the omissions. There is no Chertsey, no Blunden, no Anne Killmer, no Robert Lowell ("The Quaker Graveyard at Nantucket"), "Christmas in Black Rock", "Christmas Eve under Hooker's Statue", no Roy Campbell ("The Palm"), no Norman Nicholson, no John Heath-Stubb, no Charles Causley, no Yvor Winters ("To the Holy Spirit"), "A Prayer for my Son". No one can censure an anthology for failing to include in his collection everything with a good claim to merit. But how is it possible that Davie should have included a poem by Charles Williams so thin as to be almost invisible, and should have given us four poems by C.H. Sisson and four by Jack Clemo (all eight decent enough work), while omitting Winters and Lowell altogether?

We can be grateful to Davie for the interesting arguments in the introduction and the notes, especially what he has to say about "the plain style". (I do not understand, by the way, why he asserts that matrimony is a sacrament recognized by most Protestant churches. That it was not a sacrament was maintained by most Protestants during and after the Reformation period and there is no reason to think that Protestants have changed their minds about

Altar

Blocking the way to get behind the house
To climb crooked stone steps to sea the view
A huge gray granite boulder lay. With you
To help, I'd shift the obstacle with ease.

Was it a mass-rock blessed in pious days
Better left undisturbed? Too near the wall
It made our bedroom weep. Too flat to roll,
Too awkward for earthmovers' claws to seize.

A wise old mason told us to use fire
And water. One calm Sunday we piled coal
To heaven. Then doused the hot slab from a pool.
Not a seam cracked. Instead, we'd fouled the dir.

Lastly, we tried digging a deep wide pit.
Then eased the boulder down, and buried it.

Richard Murphy

JAPAN : JAPAN : JAPAN

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Mary Jean Bowman, with the collaboration of Hideo Ikeda & Yasumasa Tomoda

This is an important theoretical contribution to the expanding field of the economics of education, blending sociological and economic data, descriptive and analytical treatments. Bowman stresses the importance of such factors as expectations, family background, and pupils' perceptions of the labour market in decisions concerning the value of education. Due November 1981, £14.00.

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The Japanese Language Roy Andrew Miller, £11.20

Japan: The Intellectual Foundations of Modern Japanese Politics Tetsuo Najita, £3.50 paperback.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SD.

Symptoms of foreboding

By Jan Morris

GAVIN YOUNG:
Slow Boats to China
480pp. Hutchinson. £8.95.
0 19 14615 0

The travel book, at its worst so dispiriting a genre, at its best so enriching, is enjoying a sprightly if somewhat equivocal revival. It flagged a little in the aftermath of the Second World War. The Hemings, the Greenes, the Laurencess, the Waughes and the Robert Brysons had made their literary journeys, travel as such seemed to have become too commonplace for art, and the last, were mostly reduced to neo-travel accounts of unimportant feasts or Arctic explorations, topographical *deftly*, geographical sorts of novel. The magnificently infatigable Patrick Leigh Fermor was almost alone, during the 1950s and 1960s, in outlasting travel into literature.

Now the creative wanderers are on the move again — Paul Theroux, V. S. Naipaul, Jonathan Raban, Geoffrey Moorhouse, Bruce Chatwin and many another have restored the term to respectability, fulfilling an old prerogative of the travel writer by straddling the border between fiction and non-fiction, and paradoxically creating long new audiences among a generation sated, one would have supposed, with the very thought of ever crossing a frontier again.

Alas, but there's the equivocation. Their books are seldom really travel books. They rarely describe a place exactly, or introduce us to new sights and sensations. We have all been there before, courtesy of electronics. We have been everywhere — we have watched the African fireflies dance — we have heard the clash of foreign cymbals — we have seen the jagged peaks of Galapagos — we have skid down Everest with the Japanese and plunged with Cousteau into the Pacific depths. It would take a startling geographical discovery indeed to surprise the armchair traveller of the 1980s, and the purest travel writer of our times, perhaps, is Italo Calvino, whose cities are all imaginary.

By and large today's practitioners use their travels as a pretext. No H. V. Murtons or E. V. Lucas simply guide us cautiously here and there; the only people to follow in the footsteps of the contemporary travel writers are other travel writers (who have always been rather a derivative breed). A substitute for plot, a diagram for a historical theory, a vehicle for a memoir, an instrument of social comment — such are the more usual literary functions of travel today; among the best of the generation only Mr Chatwin, by wandering with open eye and eclectic notebook through Patagonia, has properly fulfilled the older purposes of the form, having no particular purpose in mind, I think, but to go and look at the place, and tell us all about it.

Far from being expository, today's books are more likely to be contemplative, or nostalgic. For example no self-respecting modern travel writer travels like other travellers, picking up a flight at Heathrow, renting a self-drive car or hooking ahead at the Holiday Inn. Outmoded methods of transport are almost *de rigueur*. Mr Theroux of course has founded an entire school of railway writers. Mr Raban has taken to the water. Ms Dervla Murphy goes everywhere by bicycle. John Hillaby always walks. And now here we have Gavin Young, who has already poled himself around the marshes of Iraq by reed canoe, labouring half way across the world (for it turns out to have been a comfortless choice) in a long and varied succession of ships.

In many ways indeed *Slow Boats to China* is an epitome of the modern travel book. It is very long, for a start: nobody is going to take you seriously nowadays if you knock off the Valparaiso Express in a couple of pages, take less than a full chapter to discuss the bus ride from Ghazni to Nalain Bazar, or recall a sea-voyage from Athens to Canton

in any fewer than Mr Young's 480 ample pages. *Slow Boats*, it is true, is intended to describe a visit to Bangkok in five lines and a job, but then throw away "trifling" details always A. W. Kinglake's weakness. . . .

Then again the book is far less concerned with destination than with arrangements and locations. Mr Young's itinerary was haphazardly arrived at. Having decided upon a long sea voyage as the theme of his book, he jumped on to ships more or less as he found them, pursuing accordingly a rather zigzag course to the Orient, and travelling at one time in another on board twenty-three vessels, including a Greek island steamer, a Turkish motor-ship, a French freighter, Egyptian and Saudi liners, a Persian Gulf tug, a Pakistani launch, an Indian schooner, a Huni ferry, a Filipino *kumphi* and a Hong Kong hydrofoil. Just occasionally he was obliged to board a train, a bus or even an aircraft, but the threat of his book is the extreme difficulty of organizing a long old-fashioned sea-voyage in the jet-and-plastic 1980s.

Mr Young is certainly not one of those travellers who remembers only the enjoyable parts. He is at his best in evoking the miseries of eastern travel — the sluggish boats in sultry waiting-rooms, the awful moments of postponement and cancellation, the desolate trail from office to office, clutching one's letter of introduction. Everywhere officialdom balefully squats. The absolute nadir of Mr Young's voyage was his confrontation with a particularly nasty Saudi immigration official at Jeddah, but hardly less depressing was his encounter with an almost equally unattractive British consular official up the road.

Not that the voyage itself was by any means all plain sailing. Mr Young seems to have enjoyed most of it, but as he hops from steam to sail, from Mediterranean to Red Sea, from the elegant efficiency of French seamanship to the harrowing jollity of Indian Ocean dhow, some genuinely frightening things happen. The Pakistani launch very nearly sinks, somewhere off the coast of Kioineli's Iran. And there are some chill moments indeed when, among the Sulu Islands, a witchy gang of Moro rebels boards the *Kampit Allinipora*.

His brows bent into an intimidating frown and his lips bent like strips of raw liver pout furiously. Abruptly he pointed to my wrist. "Geeve me wench," he said furiously. "geeve me jacket also . . ."

But the book is not mere yarning.

The Matchbox

If agitated,
it is a castnet.
Let it sit.

It is a little drawer
puckered with pink haired splinters,
excitable pine poker rasps,

heretic mop heads
drizzled in luminous
paint that tingles.

It is a strip of sand
in Mexico, gold gravel and
magenta burn marks,

all the white faces
who last saw a small hiss,
blue flare, shoulder wall.

This prison yard
churns mourns
a charcoal twiglet

that claws
foebly as a fawn,
coughing gravely . . .

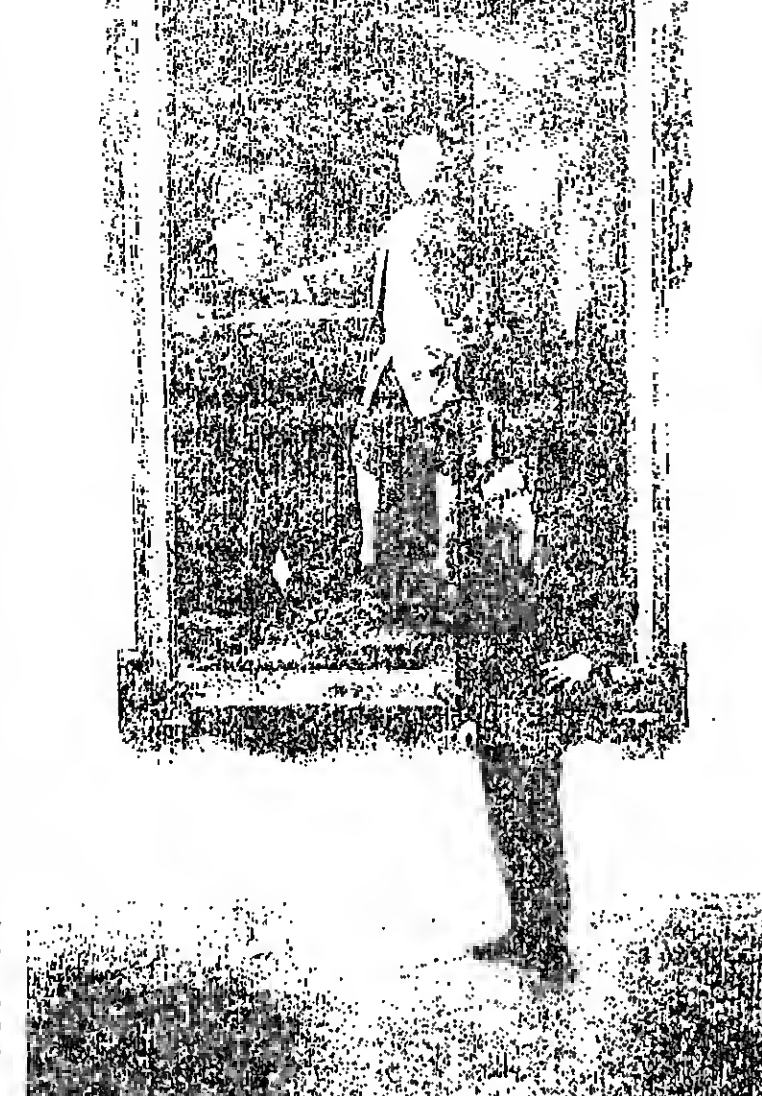
Alan Moore

like many of its modern peers, it has a confessional tendency. From time to time Mr Young, in mid-voyage, in mid-battle, side-steps into reminiscence, and we realize that his immense journey has to it some element of expiation, or evenism perhaps. He has spent many years as a foreign correspondent, and has watched some of the most horrible events of our horrible times: his intermittent flashbacks to scenes of war or catastrophe have an allegorical effect, putting the day-to-day hazards and irritations of the voyage into a profounder perspective, and giving the whole work a more dignified feel of penitential awareness.

This is a rebel, for to lesser travel books there is, all too often, a suggestive element of escapism or irresponsibility. They are like *vacation*. They may in suggest. Such elderly young men, one tends to feel of their authors, sustained by such generous advances, sunbathing around the world among the destitute, the deprived, the thick or the merely innocent, all to write their *Travel Books*, get their extracts into Sunday supplements and be chosen by Book Clubs!

All right, perhaps, in Kinglake's day; harder to swallow now. But Mr Young, by revealing from time to time his limited perceptions of hell, redeems his book from mere Grand Tourist, twentieth-century style. He has travelled too long in his trade, anyway, ever to mock or patronize. If he has his moments of irritation, if for all his experience he occasionally lapses to hurry the East, at least he never talks of *hurry in his*, and his evident gift for friendship gives his book a curious sense of running comradeship.

This is the strongest aspect of *Slow Boats to China* — its breadth of sympathy and its honest affection. The weakest aspect is the writing, which is not, to be frank, very interesting (and which could with advantage be cut by half). But the most suggestive aspect, as in so much of the best contemporary travel writing, lies in a certain underlying sense of unease or impermanence, which keeps the kind and courageous Mr Young, it seems, always restlessly on the move, nagged always by tragic images. What will they read it for, I wonder, in a century's time? For information? For inspiration? For nostalgia? For entertainment, I hope; but I rather fear tendencies may get hold of the book, and searching out Mr Young's moments of dark intuition, and placing it beside other contemporary specimens of the form, oblige their seniors to discuss Symptoms of Foreboding in twentieth-century travel literature.



Woody Allen, winter 1963: this study in funniness and poses is one of 160-odd black-and-white photographs, with eight in colour, in *Ruth Orkin's A Photo Journal* (152pp, Srekey & Warburg, £15, 0 436 34050 X); sent by Horizon to photograph the as yet little-known comedian, then playing at the Bitter End club in Greenwich Village, she found him in his apartment where the telephone never stopped ringing (he was trying to subtle) so they went instead to the nearest large indoor public place — the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Horizon found the portrait too offbeat to publish. Another photograph from the book appears on page 1382.

Sea-spun yarns

By Nicholas Shakespeare

TRISTAN JONES:
Adrift
272pp. The Bodley Head, £6.95.
0 370 31422 5

Tristan Jones was last sighted in *The Incredible Voyage* bidding farewell to his vessel Sea Dart in Montevideo harbour. As the culmination of a voyage lasting six years, he had hailed this sturdy twenty-footer three miles up the Andes to Lake Titicaca, flown the world's highest burgee, and descended the swamps of the Paraguay.

Adrift is the postscript to this journey, and begins with Tristan Jones's discovery, on his return to England, that the Newhaven customs had impounded Sea Dart pending payment of £750 in VAT. The course of the book is determined by his efforts to raise such a sum abroad, principally through the writing of *The Incredible Voyage*, and his growing conviction that "my task was to try to make people think about the folk of the oceans — mariners — and about sail".

It takes him, undaunted and penniless, from a prison in Rio Grande do Sul to the boiler-room of Harrods, and on to New York where he runs charter cruises while searching for a publisher. In the bars and doss-houses on the way, he makes his usual acquaintance with incredible people: a fugitive Irishman whom he sails to freedom, pursued by the Argentine authorities; a Welsh tramp with a love of Emily Dickinson and, most memorably, the Colonel — an alcoholic window-cleaner and former professor at Boston University. The Colonel's life has been "what we think of as full". "Of what is it full?" asks Tristan. "Inertial, my friend . . . Goddamned inertial".

Adrift is characterized by the same quality. For a sailor, Tristan Jones spends quite a bit of time on shore and his quest for £750 is no substitute for an attempt on the world's vertical sailing record — especially since his fidelity to Sea Dart has its limits. When, at the end, he gets her back, he is prepared to saw two inches off her doghouse so that she can be displayed in New York in the ball-room of the Waldorf Astoria. In Montevideo, he had already sold her sextant, charts, outboard motor and dinghy.

Without the discipline of a fixed journey, indeed for twenty months without his boat, Tristan Jones's account of his ramblings is a thing of shreds and patches. The blunt, salty style is there and the sea-spun truths, but little of the fascination with history and legend which informed *The Incredible Voyage*. His disdain for landlubbers means that he tends to Tintinize those characters who are just ships that bump in the night. "Shut up, you gringo pig", snarls Fatty, the Brazilian policeman who arrests him. "Got some terrific news for you, old chap" exults the cricket-loving foreign Office Official who secures his release. "India's all out".

The sea, as always remains Tristan Jones's obsession, and the main joy of this book lies in his restless attempt to define it. "We come from the sea . . . we smell, we even taste of the sea. Taste your tears and taste salt water, taste your sweat and every low-jetty on earth is rushed in. Though smiles and siltation are used somewhat over-enthusiastically — Star Rid-erbanst herself at the weather like a wanton wench warning a weary warrior" — the author communicates more through the sound of his prose than its contents. There is something shanty-like in the simple, repeated return of his ideas and his eyes to the sea, something reminiscent of Slocum and London.

STEFEN HUMPHRIES:

Hoolligans or Rebels?
An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939
272pp. Oxford: Blackwell, £12.50.
0 631 12982 0

In his opening chapter, Stephen Humphries describes and deprecates the "cultural deprivation" theories which interpret the "persistent rule-breaking" of the working-class youth as a mere product of environment. What has traditionally been viewed as indiscipline and delinquency is, he maintains, "resistance". At any rate, "much of the behaviour of working-class youth subcultures that is conventionally stigmatized as antisocial can alternatively be conceptualized as resistance and viewed to some extent as an indictment of oppressive institutions."

Richard Hoggart, who sees these young people as victims of "mass trends", lost, exploited and debilitated, where Humphries sees them as rebels, creatively engaged in class conflict, is thus found "unnecessarily pessimistic". The thought crosses one's mind that Hoggart could perhaps be said to *understand* what he is saying, because he uses good lay English and not the jargon of the professions. It is rather hard to tell whether Humphries is optimistic, pessimistic or neither: though this is due less to jargon of which he is relatively innocent than to the thesis-like habit of leaving nothing unsaid, including what has been said already. He is not altogether to be blamed if the language of his commentary seems flat and inhuman beside that of the taped interviews drawn largely from the Bristol People's Oral History Project. In fact Hoggart has never struck me as notably pessimistic; outside some of the interviews, I can find nothing in his book as permanently encouraging as his quotation from Wordsworth: "Reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with a disheartening melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind."

If Humphries means us to believe that delinquency always, or mostly, stems from "the rational and discriminating resistance of working-class youth to authority" — that is, like the IRA, they know what they are about — then it is he who is pessimistic. I would say. At all events, those who have been nudged or hurt on the football terraces will draw little comfort from the suggestion that the aggressive street-gangs which often condemned as evidence of animal brutality are to a large extent ritualized and involve customary constraints that prevent serious injury. No doubt there is an element of truth there, and such expressions as "stun monkeys" and "tainted rippers" of the degenerate and morally retarded residuum of the working class" (rarely seen in print these days) make one wish there were certainly more.

That is the trouble with "mass observation", whatever the stance of the observer: it rarely conveys the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. "Eurocentrism" in Asian history has recently been overthrown by indigenous scholars, and (as an unkind and inaccurate account has it) the old pirates have been transformed into heroes and the old heroes into pirates. Sociology doesn't seem to have the time, or the means, to tell which exactly were or are which: pirates or heroes, hoolligans or rebels? It all has to be one thing or the other. A piquant example of this arises from a photograph of a fifteen-year-old delinquent reproduced from Cyril Burt's *The Young Delinquent* (1925). "Although Burt thought that the youth's face expressed the psychological disturbance of the adolescent years, it could equally well be seen as expressive of

justifiable anger, rebellion and stubborn independence." "Both read the Bible day and night, but then read'st Black where I read white." The picture could equally well be of the young Dylan Thomas, or except for the cap and the fact somebody's passport photograph. It could be expressive of anything except strong and distinct feelings of any kind. It could be simply expressive of the slightly disgruntled or tough men adopted by many people when faced with a camera. What had the boy done? What was done to him? What happened later, what sort of life did he lead?

Never trust the sociologist; trust the tale. Although recollected in the putative tranquillity of age, the tales transcribed here have the ring of authenticity. They abound in incidents to which every once came hand and ringing ear will return an echo. One informant turned up late at school every morning to avoid payers and religious instruction. Children are quick to detect hypocrisy, the gap between doctrine and deed — this sensitivity being perhaps necessary to the survival of the species — and the girl in this case had abominably awful reasons for disbelieving in a God of love. I remember managing to avoid religious instruction by doing "extra English" (ie, solitary reading) instead; no doubt extra English was needed, but that wasn't my motive. Later I dodged boring cricket by leading the music in charge to believe I was playing tennis (then coming in as a rather exotic option), while leaving the tennis master to assume I was playing cricket. This is nothing compared with the achievement of Winnie Ette, born in Bristol in 1899. She told the teacher that her mother thought she was stupid. She home thereupon, she told her mother that the teacher thought she had mumps. "Well, she wrapped me round in flannel" I was home for about four months. Could any of these stratagems really be called (as the title of this chapter has it) "challenges to classroom coercion"? We were just bored and miserable, we didn't see ourselves as freedom fighters. An animal who runs away from men with sticks is hardly to be called a rebel.

But Humphries is dedicated to the conspiracy theory. Children conspire to behave badly in answer to the conspiracy of state education, the latter defined as "an agency of class control to enforce obedience to authority and resignation to one's lot and to create an orderly and efficient labour force in the next generation." He allows that teachers were not or are not (the tense of his argument is uncertain but, *mutatis mutandis*, seemingly continuous) "consciously involved in a manipulative process", and that they often viewed themselves as "missionaries bringing moral and cultural standards to a deprived and brutalized working class". In other words, they were "liberals", well-perpetuating the conditions within which they operated. Thank God for them even so, I would say. Some teachers, and not only teachers in state schools, were pure bastards — as the transcripts amply illustrate, and my own memory less sensationally prompts — but there were good and aware and inspiring ones too. Humphries paints a consistently black picture. One would like to see what shape his white picture would take.

He is surely correct in naming the three "principal dogmas" inculcated in the elementary schools as those of religion, imperialism and competitive individualism. He does not see the last of these — as some of my generation did — though obstinately saw it at the time — as a way of escaping from the other two. But "competitive" and "individualism" are both bad words, I suppose. By harsh extrapolation, "individualism" becomes at the best self-seeking, at the worst class traitors. Humphries does not say this, he merely implies that many children (the best?) refused to compete, on principle: "Fundamentally,

Resisters of the rules

By D. J. Enright

interviews reveal a widespread disavowal from, and rejection of, the bourgeois striving for personal achievement and advancement". So possibly the memoir has been a mediocrity all along.

I think he is, again, partly right and a minority did react in this way. "Class" can work strongly, as both something to leave behind and something to stay with. But you need to establish how I cannot imagine the children's states of mind. If that isn't too grand a term — whether laziness, an unheroic fear of being called a swot, or principled repudiation of the bitch which the young of those generations were much less conscious of what they were doing or not doing than is assumed throughout here. Humphries has compassion and indignation; he lacks experience. Things may be different these days, in some respects.

Clearly, some things have not changed. There are accounts here of colour hostility in the second decade of the century, of the persecution of shopkeepers with German-sounding names, and of warfare between Jewish and non-Jewish boys, "involving dozens and dozens on each side. And the stones used in fly like ball". No sign of these "uncommon constraints" here. There is also a paragraph from *The Times* reporting the killing of an innocent Armenian refugee in 1897 in a street fracas. Humphries comments:

Although most commentators have explained such incidents by reference to pathological disturbance, brutality or, in jingoist, when viewed within the local context of unemployment and urban decay it becomes clear that they can in fact most profitably be seen as misdirected expressions of class feeling and class hostility.

What weren't misdirected were the blows and kicks. (And what, incidentally, is meant by the words "most usefully"? Perhaps there is something to be said for "individualism" after all: it doesn't go around in gangs.)

In a similar spirit, Humphries tells us in the chapter "Social Crime and Family Survival" that a social worker's "indictment" of a seventeen-year-old girl sent to a borstal for three years in 1924 "vividly illustrates how images of immorality were imposed on those who most tenaciously refused to acknowledge the property rights of the privileged". The indictment reads thus: "Coal lifting in X is commonplace; everyone more or less does it. Girl is very simple and weak, but morally innocent. Feels justified in stealing if family is in need." If this is an example of "class-prejudiced criminological literature", one can only suppose that Humphries had led a more than usually sheltered life.

Of course our sympathies are with the girl — she was "morally innocent", stealing coal is a lesser offence than robbing a hen-roost — but she would probably be the first to smile at this gloss on her activities. During the early 1930s Charlie Portgale showed initiative, skill and wit in pilfering tea-bags, procuring broken biscuits on the cheap (after having "accidentally" broken them himself), and flattening a ha'penny on the railway line so that it grew into a penny for the gas. It is doubtful whether he would recognize the solemn account of himself as revealing "a determined and explicitly moral resolution to provide for his family whatever the legal consequences".

But enough. Like many other books, this one says much the same thing again and again in different contexts and in slightly different words. It does, however, contain some highly interesting and little-known material on organized school strikes, almost all of them set off by excessive or "irregular" corporal punishment, but still, in being collective, lending some support to the

author's central contention. In general the testimonies are varied, graphic, far from simple-minded, full of vigour and the flavour of flesh and blood: we are indebted to Humphries for retrieving and reproducing them. Humour is not infrequent in them, and the remembered pleasures of "larking about" ("We used to give a lot of tin", stealing apples, sliding down the quarry on an old bath. Initiating teachers, and doing prosperous customers out of their change. There are also some resounding old sayings as "It was all dices and names and battles". "I told her she could keep her job". "We was always learnt to be what you call jackdaws". "All politicians is poison, in my eyes". "Back in those days when you see a policeman, my God, you go quiet right away". And there are vivid reminders of the sexual ignorance of the old days, notably (though not only) among girls. A Bristol teenager of the 1930s brought babies came from Palmolive soap since post-war soap was only seen in the house when the milkmaid was coming to deliver her mother's new

baby. When she had difficulties with her periods, the doctor asked her if she had been naughty. Yes, she confessed as her mother blushed, she had broken a cup the previous day.

Naturally there are pitiful testimonies as well, and grim ones. The most horrifying (the child is spoiled, so don't spare the rod) concern experiences in reformatories, which the author, having exhausted his anti-author, rather tamely describes as "the ultimate weapon deployed by the middle class and the state to contain and control those elements within working-class youth culture that most threatened their continued domination". Along with orphanages, industrial schools and nautical training schools, reformatories appear to have been staffed by a picked body of muscular sadists. Had the Russians recruited their British agents from these sources, surely the country would not stand where it does today. If Humphries is right, why is it that they didn't? Could it be that, in our eyes, all politicians were poison?

ARTHUR KOESTLER

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The era of lost innocence

By Tom Shippey

KINGSLEY AMIS (Editor):
The Golden Age of Science Fiction
374pp. Hutchinson. £6.95.
0 09 145770 X

The "Golden Age" of science fiction, according to Kingsley Amis in the introduction to his new anthology, ran from the late 1940s to about 1960, or just about the moment when he produced *New Maps of Hell*. Writers in the field at that time had the benefit of early exposure to science fiction magazines. Their ambitions at least had been raised by John W. Campbell. They had not yet developed a demoralizing self-consciousness. Perhaps most significant of all, they were in closer touch with their audience "than any group since the Tudor court poets". If they wanted to make an allusion or play a fessie, they could be sure the point would be taken. Conversely "playing it straight" or doing what you

did first time were certain to draw walls of disappointment in readers' letters—a powerful stimulus to effort.

After about 1960, Mr Amis believes, that fortuitous conjunction disappeared. The "New Wave" grabbed the headlines with its "shock tactics, tricks with typography, one-line chapters, strained metaphors, obscenities, obscenities, drugs, Oriental religions and left-wing politics". Many authors went into decline, good young ones failed to take their place, universities began to pump out theses and articles, and we ended up with science fiction studies, "a new and thriving discipline which has already begun to influence the genre it serves". Amis quotes that last phrase from a book by Dr Partridge of the University of Reading, and cries immediately: Check! Influence for the better or the worse? There is no doubt in his mind that science fiction has been "circumscribed by academics, just as literature has been encumbered by English courses. In both cases the reason is the same. Instead of doing what they wanted to do, moderated only by the instant feedback of disinterested praise or

blame, authors turned to a laborious concern for critical values, in the end doing only what other people had decided they should.

Will SF survive its exit from the gutter? Amis asks, and he answers "No". "Science fiction has lost its innocence, a quality notoriously hard to recapture." His anthology of seventeen stories published between 1950 and 1960 stands, then, as a memorial to the lost era, as also a reminder of past glories for those too young to have experienced them first time round.

There is certainly a lot in Amis's theory, expressed though it is in peppy or even blimpish style: "There are usually good reasons for the existence of barriers... the British seem to have come through rather better than the Americans, possibly out of superior national virtue... reliable gardeners were always found to find". To add some corroborations, the 1960s and 1970s did seem to produce several cases of the good or excellent SF writer who got to the top of his form, wrote a series of masterpieces, achieved widespread recognition, and then turned into a

guinea and collapsed. Kurt Vonnegut is the obvious example (to Amis, but also to SF writers generally), but one could add Samuel Delany—*Now and the Einstein Intersection* followed by *Dhalgren*; Robert Heinlein—*Stranger in a Strange Land* leading straight to one prize turkey after another; and Frank Herbert, with *Dune* trailing down through all its successors to *Children of Dune*, *God-Emperor of Dune*, and who knows what to come. Other writers lost heart during the Vietnam era (Paul Anderson), or turned rich and cynical (Robert Silverberg), or were analysed academically into writers' block (Ursula Le Guin). A thorough study of this era and this genre might well make Amis's case.

There are, however, other possibilities. It is interesting to look at the virtues of the stories selected here. Most of them, to begin with, are downbeat; they are stories of failure. The most evident example is Philip Latham's "The Xi Effect" (familiar already from Edmund Crispin's *Best SF 1*). In this a jolly tone of scientific camaraderie and discovery—look! the radiation recorder's stuck at twenty thousand angstroms, wow! the moons of Jupiter have gone out of phase—leads on to the realization that the whole universe is only a bubble in space-time, and one that has started to shrink, to a savagely satirical scene of dumb taxpayers asking why the scientists don't do something about it, to a close of hopeless darkness as colours and light itself fade out.

But this is only one of a dozen snap or chiller endings: the explorers finding out that Earth is doomed, the artificial personality about to be switched off, the escaper realizing his whole world is built on a table-top and he himself is only a market-researcher's toy. One of the qualities Amis has looked for, it seems, is a drive towards creating insecurity; and that, of course, thrives on a consensus to push against. The only story I hadn't read in this anthology, Jerome Bixby's "It's a Good Life", is a bitter fable of togetherness as an isolated community clusters round the TV under threat of death for looking discontented. So was *Asiomatic Science Fiction* a reaction to *Saturday Evening Post*? If it was, one can see why the delight in witty challenge has faded. We might now

be glad of a touch of cosy community by way of a relief.

Another odd feature is the strongly theological nature of many of the stories. "The Xi Effect" builds up to the Twenty-third Psalm; Arthur Clarke's famous "The Nine Billion Names of God" ends with the stars quietly putting themselves out; Harry Harrison's "The Streets of Askelon" is a straightforward assault on Christianity as parochial, misleading and self-deceptive, written in a style easily paralleled by a dozen anti-missionary stories of the time. Would anyone take the trouble now? Hard to tell, but it does look as if the conflict between faith and reason, so gladly exploited either way by Clarke and Harrison, Boucher and Knight, has simply faded out, not resolved but superseded by other interests. The sacred cows Amis grew up with have been secularized. Attacks now are on orthodoxies which the middle-aged have never recognized: dissent is still there, but the uniform has changed.

Amis's gloom seems to me ill-founded, though, not so much because the things he complains of didn't happen, as because they were the result of individual errors not of sociological trends. In the last years of his editorship of *Analog* (formerly *Asiomatic*), John Campbell, for instance, made the mistake of trying to repeat past successes, stuck too long with the authors he had discovered himself, and as a result never published Larry Niven—an author of exactly the type Mr Amis would like: independent, shocking, technologically oriented, and at his peak well into the 1970s. His story "Cloak of Anarchy" (1972) would fit this collection perfectly, as would John Varley's "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank" (1976) or Gene Wolfe's "Christmas Eve" from *A Book of Days* (not yet published in this country).

You can still do plenty with robots, aliens and computers, is the moral. And though there was a problem with over-expansion and bandwagon-jumping, a few expensive failures (far more than the successes) are publishers' cure that. Mr Amis's is a good anthology, for the 1950s. But one can produce a better one, aimed at exactly the same taste, for the 1970s—a better one still if that taste was allowed to be just a little broader.

Putative parricide

By David Profumo

B. V. BELL

Food for Worms
120pp. Sudbury (Suffolk):
Lunatic Fringe Publications. £1.95.
0 906159 04 0

In an earlier novel, *Fragments From an Orange-Scented Garden* (1977), Brian Bell described how Harry, an artist in Cambridge ("fair jewel of the East!"), breaks away from his traditions and plummets into a nightmare world, finally to be killed by his putative son. That work was humorously prefaced with this warning: "The opinions expressed in this book are not necessarily those of the author, whereas the spelling mistakes are, and one hopes that a similar proviso is to be assumed for *Food for Worms*—another novel peppered with misprints and generalizations. In some of their concerns, too, the books are quite similar; here, for example, the chief protagonist, Fontaine O'Brien, is disenchanted with his work at Cambridge (once again "fair jewel of the East!"), and abandons his traditional pursuits, plunging instead into a hellish world of esoteric knowledge and delights from which he finally departs when murdered by his putative son.

However, *Food for Worms* strives to identify something more substantial about the dangers of aspiration than these superficial correspondences might suggest. For it is subtitled "A Faustian Allegory"—"Marlowe's set tradition," the blurb

in terms the self-interested fashionist in which people spoil each other's lives. O'Brien passes his Cambridge days writing a short novel about a sinister seventeenth-century Royalist spy, but abandons the book (it becomes the "food for worms") and returns to his family in Australia, bearing within him the germ of some Old World malaise with which his experiences have infected him; but nosophyte is not defined for us, but its symptom is spiritual degeneracy, and it forms part of the metaphoric pattern of worms, germs, blight and disease which subsequently shape his encounters.

One of these is with the avatar of an entertaining smoking-jacketed demon. Having struck the customary Faustian bargain, O'Brien proceeds to build up a flourishing business empire in Sydney, steeping himself in numerology, botany, Mephistophelian friend Bacon, he rejects and marries Troy, a Greek-Turkish stenographer, whom he later loses in a bout of drunken possessiveness. This prompts him to return to Cambridge for a fateful reunion with an Italian lover of his student days, a "fleshy succubus" called Reseda Morbis—so named, presumably, after the restorative floral spell recorded by Pliny.

Though odd snatches of this book are very good indeed, the narrative is too brief to accommodate the Faustian parallels it invokes; while sometimes ingenious and, like the play, infused with an uneasy comedy, it is too often heavily-handedly festooned with jangling philosophical abstraction which strangle subtly.

Patriotism through prints

By Celina Fox

WALTON RAWLS:

The Great Book of Currier and Ives
America
488pp. New York: Abbeville £45.
UK distributors: Deutsch.
0 89659 070 4

In 1834, Nathaniel Currier, a young journeyman lithographer from Boston, established his own business in New York City. By mid-century, his "Grand Central Depot" on Nassau Street had grown into one of the largest suppliers of prints to the American people, and when James Merritt Ives was made a partner in 1857, the trade-name "Currier & Ives" became synonymous with "The Best, the Cheapest, and the Most Popular Pictures in the World". This was no empty boast. The firm's catalogues at one time listed nearly three thousand different subjects, costing from fifteen cents to three dollars each. Pedlars and travelling agents tramped the streets disposing of them on a sala or return basis, while the larger, more expensive designs were handled by regular outlets such as general stores. Some of the prints from the collection which forms the basis of the present volume were rescued from a harness shop in Newburgh, New York, which had retained its old stock.

The "great" book of Currier and Ives prints, selected from the Harry T. Peters collection now in the Museum of the City of New York, is massively and lavishly produced, with splendid colour reproductions which in some instances, even bring out the fading and discoloration of the originals. It captures much of the spirit of the prints, the colouring, which was largely undertaken by young immigrant girls in the factory in Spruce Street. Compared with the romantic heights of the *Voyages Pittoresques*, these prints have a naive charm while their liveliness is in sharp contrast with the linear tedium of the black-and-white wood engravings of the *Illustrated London News*. No wonder, as the author is fond of reminding us, they nowadays constitute collectors' items, the most worth thousands of dollars.

At the time, Nathaniel Currier certainly made no artistic claims for the works. As Walton Rawls points out, he never advertised his lithographs as "art" but as "pictures" or "prints", simply characterizing them as one catalogue as interior decoration: "handsomely colored and suitable for framing or for ornamenting walls or panels, the backs of bird cages, clock fronts, or any other place where an elegant and tasteful picture is required". He did not make copies of great paintings to sell as such, but as representations of historical events or people otherwise unrecorded. Neither are there any contemporary artists of real repute linked to the firm. Subjects are attributed to Catlin and Inness but their work was probably plagiarized. Artists who specialized in American genre doubtless preferred the prestigious patronage of the American Art Union, which supported them by lotteries of their pictures and enhanced their reputation through the distribution of thousands of facsimile engravings.

Furthermore, Currier and Ives do not appear to have been particularly generous employers. Their longest-serving regular employee was a woman and they relied heavily on immigrant artists, groups notoriously incapable of determined wage-bargaining. The German-born Louis Maurer, the most gifted of the firm's painters, of whose work we have seen five dollars a week, received a rise to twelve dollars, but had to move to another company in order to make enough money to enable him to marry. Artists were liable to have their work altered, were expected to produce stock work and collaborate on joint productions. In contrast to the accurate reportage that was developing in the illustrated newspapers, Currier and Ives took their material

unashamedly from second-hand sources, whether for series devoted to the joys of pioneer life or the habits of Red Indians.

Yet these prints embody many of the attitudes of the average American over half a century. After a useful introduction to the history of the firm, Walton Rawls attempts to give some account of these, considering the prints thematically as depictions of patriotic history, national phenomena, the city and the country, outdoor pursuits and the security of the home. Too often, however, the text reads like a parallel commentary, a child's guide to American history, rather than an attempt to describe how the prints articulated such subject-matter.

The propaganda content of some of the prints is obvious. Currier issued many which contrasted the degradation of drunkenness with the prosperity attendant on a sober life: in one portrait, he even removed a glass from Washington's hand to conform to temperance sensibilities. Given his large Southern audience, he did not produce any anti-slavery material but on the contrary, published hundreds of prints ridiculing the aspirations of American negroes. Predictably, he also made fun of women's rights. These were no doubt the stock prejudices of Jacksonian common man and Currier never made any pretence of seeking through high art to improve the morality of the age.

However, it is interesting to speculate what the effect might have been of the most seemingly innocuous print on its audience. Rawls quotes from the diary of a New York mayor, Philip Hone:

Killing buffaloes, hunting wild horses, sleeping every night on the ground... and depending from day to day for means of existence upon the deer, wild turkey and bears... are matters of thrilling interest to citizens who read them in their green slippers seated before a shining grate.

How many citizens were tempted by Currier and Ives's bucolic depiction of the pleasures and thrills of frontier life to pull on their boots and head west? How many thus learnt of the attractions of the New World in distant countries only to realize the gap between reality and the idyl almost as soon as they stepped on the boat? Such musings may seem far-fetched, but Dickens had all seeing his "state-room" on board the Britannia steam-ship in January 1842 bound for Halifax and Boston, was driven to demand how "this utterly impracticable, thoroughly hopeless, and profoundly preposterous box, had the remotest reference to, or connection with, those chaste and pretty, not to say gorgeous little bowers, sketched by o' masterly hand, in the highly varnished litho-

graphic plan hanging up in the agent's counting-house in the city of London". Jacob Riis's photographic exposure of New York squalor could scarcely have had the same impact if the generality of city views had not been so glibly refined.

It would be inappropriate to over-interpret images which rarely aimed at a purpose higher than that of making money. Currier was remarkably catholic in the themes he introduced. He managed to corner the market for religious images at the same time as issuing mildly suggestive pictures of pretty girls. The portmanteau of the illustrated newspapers was not his style: the context of these prints was much more popular. Even the location of his shop is significant. To the south lay the great American Museum where his friend Phineas T. Barnum exhibited such wonders as Tom Thumb and Madame Clocina, the original headless lady, both duly celebrated in prints along with other curiosities. To the north on Broadway was the Mechanics' Hall where Christy's Minstrels performed for years. Currier had started in trade by producing lithograph music sheets with attractive illustrations on the cover. Among his early successes was *Crow Quadrilles* which contained Thomas D. Rice's "Jim Crow", the first minstrel song. With its chorus refrain and accompanying "double shuffle" dance, it spread like a musical epidemic on both sides of the Atlantic (even being employed in England by the staid caricaturist HB as the basis of a *Political Sketch*). This was an expanding metropolitan world of the cant expression, instant appeal and easy sentiment, the rush prints for disasters, the news extras and flashy political banners designed for a society where the pace of communication was increasing fast. From the racing clippers to the Mississippi paddle steamers and the ever extending railroad system, Currier and Ives partook of the wonders of the age.

In 1842, Mathew Brady, a one-time lithographer, opened his daguerreotype studio on Broadway and by the late 1860s, wet-plate photographic portraits were the rage. Currier and Ives barely changed their production methods over the remaining decades of the century and never succumbed to the mechanized benefits of chromolithography or steam-powered printing presses, let alone photography techniques. Thus, by 1900 their business had all but collapsed and it remained only for the prints to be disposed of for the bundle and the stones to be sold by the pound. But the needs that Currier and Ives had satisfied so successfully remained and were soon to find fulfilment again: the best, the cheapest, and the most popular picture in the world still emanated from America, only in the present century they came from Hollywood.

The Tenth Muse

My music is not one of the nine noble daughters of Mnemosyne In diaphanous nightshirts with names that linger In the air like scent of jasmine or magnolia on Mediterranean nights. Nor was any supple son of Zeus appointed to pollinate my ear with poppy dust or whispars of sea-spray. My muse lands with a thud, like a sack of potatoes. He has no aura. The things he grunts are things I'd rather not hear. His attitude is "Take it or leave it, that's the way it is", drumming his fingers on an empty pan by way of music. If I were a man I would enjoy such grace and flavour, instead of having to cope with this dense late-invented, smooth with no more pedigree than the Incredible Hulk, who can't play a note, and keeps repeating "Women haven't got the knack" in my most delicately strung and sealed ear.

Sylvia Kantaris



"Head - Yellow and Black" by Roy Lichtenstein, an oil painting dated 1962; this ingenious portrait is one of 88 drawings, paintings, sculptures, structures and graphics in a sale of Contemporary Art on Tuesday December 1, in Christie's, 8 King Street, London SW1.

The vanity of it all

By Richard Calvocoressi

MICHAEL CROYDON:

Ivan Albright
307pp. New York: Abbeville. £40.
UK distributors: Deutsch.
0 89659 003 8

The last couple of years have seen a minor revival of interest in the paintings of Ivan Albright. Excluded in 1977 from the Arts Council's pioneering *The Modern Spirit: American painting 1908-1935*, his work has since appeared in two important exhibitions of American art in Brussels, the other in Berlin. More recently, Albright's idiosyncratic vision was placed in the context of later-American regionalism by the penultimate in the Centre Pompidou's series of huge, heterogeneous surveys, *Les Réalistes 1919-1939*. His work was last seen at *Westkunst*, a large exhibition of post-war art held this summer in Cologne, where he was represented by one painting, "The Temptation of St Anthony". This morbid image of putrefying flesh and matter, every wrinkle, bump and blemish obsessively picked out in Albright's inimitable sharp-focus style, was the artist's entry for a competition sponsored in 1946 by United Artists, who wanted a painting for their film *Bel Ami* (based on a story by de Maupassant). The winner was Max Ernst whose picture, despite its echoes of Bosch, seemed tame compared to the ferocious pessimism of Albright's.

During the First World War Albright and his twin brother enlisted in the American Army Medical Corps and were sent to a base hospital at Nantes in France. There the twenty-one year old Ivano was asked to make clinical drawings of an operation for an aneurism of the neck. This led to the filling of several medical notebooks with precise water-colour drawings of wounds and internal organs, and later to a commission to illustrate a book on brain surgery which was never published. It is clear that this early spell of anatomical drawing proved ideal training for the microscopic technique, applied equally to human bodies and inanimate objects, which he perfected and did not vary after about 1930. So painstaking is this technique that it often took Albright years to complete a single picture. But his fascination with the surface texture of *minute* tends to obscure a deeper purpose, a bookish clutter of objects symbolizing the passing of time, their melodramatic lighting and, not least, the portrayal of flesh as a livid, bruised substance, Albright's pictures are twentieth-century reinterpretations of the traditional *memoria mori* or *vanitas* subject. As if to reinforce an allegorical reading, he deliberately gave some

of them pseudo-poetic, biblical-sounding titles such as "Into the World There Came a Soul Called Ida" or "Heavy the Oar to Him Who is Tired, Heavy the Coat, Heavy the Sea". One of his most horrible paintings was for M.G.M.'s film adaptation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1944. As a result of working in Hollywood he developed an exaggerated, technicolour style which is not far from kitsch.

Despite Albright's interest in dissolving forms, many of his portraits have a curiously petrified look. Paradoxically, it is in his few sculptured heads (only five different bronzes are known to exist) that one gets a real feeling of organic life. One of these bronzes, a simple, touching portrait of Albright's wife done in 1954, was recently presented to the Tate Gallery by Michael Croydon, the author of this book.

Ivan Albright, the first proper appraisal of the artist's long career, is timely—Albright is nearing his eighty-fifth birthday—and it contains some intriguing insights into his laborious working procedures. In his foreword (a reprint from the catalogue of Albright's retrospective at the Art Institute of Chicago—his native city—in 1964), the painter Jean Dubuffet mentions a visit to Albright's studio:

I saw through magnifying glasses his nests of wasps and mice, his cut-glass flasks, oxidized and encrusted with filth, his old hats and gloves, his collection of dust and spider webs. I saw with stupefaction in his studio on a turntable, the dramatic ground floor of a devastated shack which he had placed there after having numbered all the bricks so that he could reconstruct it with his own hands and position behind it, with an application truly demonic, so as to make appear in the interior of a room seen through a shattered window, the most alarming disorder of singular objects that can be imagined. I shall never forget that. I have never seen anything as frightening.

Dubuffet seems to have been affected more by Albright's obsessive habits than by his paintings, though the crazy stage set which he describes became "The Window", or, to give the picture its correct title, "Poor Room—There is No Time, No End, No Today, No Yesterday, No Tomorrow, Only the Forever, and Forever and Forever without End"—a painting which Albright began in 1941 and worked at on and off for twenty years.

Croydon devotes an unnecessary amount of space to Albright's poetry, most of which makes execratable reading. The book weighs eight pounds and is the size of an atlas. It is lavishly illustrated in colour and includes some enlarged details of paintings which one would rather not have to look at.

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commentary

Examination and transfiguration

By Peter Conrad

Louise
English National Opera

Charpentier said that in writing the text for *Louise* his model had been Zola, while in writing the music he had followed Wagner. In the post-dox-ridden interchange between these two influences lies the fascination of his opera. For Louise, the seamstress who flees from her suffocating family to the sexual licence of Montmartre, is a Zolaesque character liberated from the determined and oppressive fate of naturalism by the exhilaration of Wagnerian music. Zola switched, as he proposed in his treatise on the experimental novel, to import the naturalism of Claude Bernard from medicine into literature. The novel was to be a sub-division of social science, concerned not with characters but with animate organisms, not with actions but with tropisms, not with society but with the physico-chemical compound of the environment. Charpentier's heroine is a suitable case for such analytic treatment, since her biological vitality, her yearning for the sun, is baffled and thwarted by parental resentment, and flight to Montmartre is her attainment of the animal health which, as the poet Julien tells her, is the birth-right of all creatures.

Her career demonstrates, as Zola

wished, "the working of the intellectual and sensual manifestations of physiology", and at the end, when she renounces her parents a second time and succumbs to the aphrodisiac allure of Paris, the opera passes beyond naturalism into Shavian meta-biology: the first time Louise left, it was to join Julien, who had teased her into sexual awakening; now it is not him she seeks so much as a more abstract consummation, union with the *élan vital*, the intoxication of the carnal life-force which she only finds in Paris. It is here that Wagner enters to supplement and exalt Zola, for Louise's rebellion is a clinical and therapeutic version of the atoning agonies of Isolde and Brünnhilde. They have to die to possess the subject of their love, but Louise, cured of her neuroses, rushes off to seize satisfaction here and now. Isolde and Brünnhilde levitate; Louise, however, disappears into the immediate gratifications of the city.

The subjects of Zola's naturalist experiments are victimized by environment, warped by heredity. Louise is rescued from their inert condition by the Wagnerian impetus of Charpentier's score. No characters in opera can remain subject to social or biological law, because singing is a victory over that abasement, a confident, exultant of will. Louise's liberators are musical forces – the tenor voice of Julien, whose caroling salute is a wordless expression of joy and provides her with a motto for taunting her parents, and whose bul-

lying serenade outside her workshop goesads her into absconding, making her yield by giving her a headache; the organic orchestral tumult which urges her to turn, in her fourth act delirium, from a lyric into a dramatic soprano, propelling herself to freedom by singing so noisily about her craving for it. There's a calculated incommensurateness between the size of the dramatic anecdote and that of the enormous orchestra. The stage is a domestic enclave, a room which – as Zola said of novelistic settings – has a "decisive importance" because it contains and focuses the "multiple influences", genetic and environmental, which imprint themselves on the character; but the grieving, singing, inordinate orchestra is a disembodied world, the impersonal libido which stirs in Louise and [according to Julien's refrain] in all living things. Louise's escape into the festive, alien city is her absorption into the orchestra. The Zolaesque text subjects her to a microscopic enlargement; the Wagnerian orchestra hews on her a symbolic inflation. The one studies her, the other transfigures her.

Musically, the ENO production serves Charpentier well. Though Valerie Masterson isn't quite equal to the redemptive outpourings of voice Charpentier suddenly requires of her in her frenzied final scene, John Treleaven is thrilling as Julien, and Sylvain Cambiéring, who clearly admires the score, conducts it excitingly. However, the drab designs

of René Alho and his grey, muffled sky sympathize not with the elated Louise but with her oppressive parents. Charpentier's Paris is the city of impressionism, a radiant and hedonistic haze. The brilliance of impressionist light is abetted, in the Montmartre scene, by electrification, when the lovers watch the nocturnal city glow beneath them. This lighting-up of the city matches the erotic intensification of organic life which is the opera's subject. One by one, in succession to Charpentier's Paris, all the clichés of modern art are ignited. Janet Blumner in *The Cubical City* called the "guttering electrical effluence" of New York a "protest against the demurled restrictions of nature", a brazen affront to prohibition; Joseph Stella's picture of Coney Island in 1913-14 uses geysering light to represent the city as a derelict carnival. The futurist Marinetti declared we were all born from electricity, and saw in the career of an electric light bulb a tragic history. Kurt Weill's "Berlin im Licht" rididly greets the electrification of Berlin in 1928 and senses in it the promise of sexual titillation. For this crucial scene in *Louise*, Charpentier even demands fireworks, which detonate and subside above the city as the lovers go indoors to bed; artificial mimics of the organism's brief, vital glow and its eventual extinction. The ENO's murky production makes no attempt to create this incandescence and exulting. However, the drab designs

sky, looks inappropriately dour.

Some critics, bored by the whole thing, objected to the inclusion of the dawn scene in the streets, where a lecherous noctambulist prowls to procure recruits for the city of pleasure. Cambiéring correctly defends this episode as a descent from realism into surrealism; alternatively put, it's a moment when the orchestra rises up to overtake the stage, exchanging domestic accuracy for symbolic truth. The Noctambule and his alter ego, the King of Fools in the following act, are the ambiguous twin foci of the life-force which magnetizes Louise, offering her fruition but also possibly perdition. The impressionist city is an arboreal, sensual dream. The Noctambule is the sinister genius of the surrealist city, which is not a paradise but – like Dalí's festering, fleshy New York with its intestinal subways and ejaculating skyscrapers – a pornopolis.

The ENO production fails to evoke this sovereign spirit of place. The complaint is not merely a demand for picturesque: the opera is about what Zola called the experimental laboratory of naturalism – "man living in the social milieu which he has himself produced, which he modifies every day, and in the midst of which he in his turn undergoes continuous modification". Instead of a city with its multitude of ecological niches, the ENO gives Charpentier's people only a gloomy and unfurnished stage as their habitat.

never lost sight of the romantic behind the eclectic, and was matched by the comic sophistication and vocal authority of Linda Ormiston's Rosmire and by Paul Esswood's wonderfully bewildered Arsace. All three were cleverly projected through almost exactly the same resources of mannered excess which had earlier marred the Rameau. Here it didn't matter, for the director had grasped the essence of Baroque operatic comedy, that while we laugh at the grotesqueness of the situations, we respect the truth of the emotions portrayed; our laughter at some absurd business with a teapot and cups is the opening of Act III was not allowed to obscure the grace and crispness of the musical numbers, linked by a recitative which, though Farncombe and his continuo players still favour the outmoded performance style of detached vocal and instrumental cadence, was far from slight in its bite and verve.

If Charles Farncombe's penchant for brief templ had given certain pages of *Castor et Pollux* an unwelcome urgency, it was well suited to this most smartly Italianate of Handel operas, and the cast answered with a sustained awareness of pace and ensemble playing. Lynda Russell

pressing visual standards of the Society's annual shows. Peter Rice's hideous Quality Street designs belong to a style so remote from current taste as to have a positively antiquarian appeal. Such exterior compulsions to focus attention on the music, however, are quite needless, for *Partempe* is one of those infectiously delightful Handel works, like *Acis and Galatea* and *L'Allegro and Il Penseroso*. The anti-heroic text, a brilliant confection of disguise, embarrassment and artifice, is ideally clothed by a score whose lightness of touch and perfect control of form anticipate Mozart and Rossini.

One over-enthusiastic reviewer the next day praised a musical continuity "which never descends to mere recitative". How ironic, then, that the higher values of "mere recitative" should have been so triumphantly vindicated by the same producer and conductor barely a month later in the Handel Opera Society's production of *Partempe* at Sadler's Wells. Unfashionable and largely unknown, Handel may never make it to the glittering solides of Bow Street, but goes on devastating those who can brave Rosebery Avenue and the de-

The song of the green chartreuse

By Patrick O'Connor

Emmanuel Chabrier
Wigmore Hall

Emmanuel Chabrier is known, if at all, as the composer of *España* (the main theme of which supplied the tune of a 1950s pop song which went "Ho-diggidy-H-diggidy, Hey! What you do to my heart"). Balletomanes may remember his *Bourrée Fantasque* as well as one or two other piano pieces which have served as useful "atmospheric" ballads over the years, but his work as a composer of operas and *inédites* has been neglected, so that the Songmakers' Almanac programme devoted to his vocal music recently was a real act of rediscovery.

The first half of the evening was made up of extracts from Chabrier's *L'Étoile*, *Une Education Manquée*, *Gwendoline* and *Le Roi Miroir*. On this hearing there seems little doubt that it is the first of these which is most worthy of attention today. The quartet of commercial travellers, the song of the

little star, and a duet celebrating the delights of green chartreuse suggested a work of anarchic imbecility, the nonsensical plot being set to tunes akin to both Offenbach and Bizet, but with an individuality of their own.

The duo-barcarole from *Le Roi Miroir*, charmingly sung by Dinah Harris and Richard Jackson, was more than a little reminiscent of another Venetian barcarole – that from *The Tales of Hoffmann*. The libretto for this opera comique, by three separate hands, has a complicated plot of disguise and misunderstanding about the reluctance of Henri de Valois to accede to the Polish throne. It has the advantage over the libretto of *Gwendoline* of Catulle Mendès, of at least trying to be funny. But the surprise before the interval was a version of *España* for voice, and piano with words by Eugène Adenis. This must have always seemed like a parody, but the four soloists managed to make a good deal of its may "Ole". The song-giving an impassioned performance of one of Chabrier's posthumous piano pieces – *Feuille*

On the concert platform Sarah Walker, one of the founder members of the Songmakers' Almanac, is able to display a sort of waggishness which she has so far had little opportunity to make play with in her operatic career. In the second half she sang the two best known of Chabrier's *Six Mélodies*, which comprise nearly half his song output. "Ballade des Gros Dindons" gave her some opportunity for gentle humour and showed off her low notes to advantage. "L'Étoile" (however, calls for a voice with more cutting edge at the top – a voice in fact more like that of Felicity Lott, to whom it fell to give the best song performance of the evening, "Toutes les fleurs", its long high arched phrases suiting her voice perfectly.

The evening's only disappointment was that the Songmakers had not been able to include any of the light vivas fragments from the libretto which Chabrier wrote with lyrics by his friend Verlaine. What remains of these was once performed in Paris, by a similar group of enthusiasts with Francis Poulenc at the piano.

commentary

Good fiction and bad history

By Michael Mason

The French Lieutenant's Woman
General release

Early in Karel Reisz's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* there occurs a scene which may indicate that Reisz and his scriptwriter Harold Pinter do not think very highly of a certain aspect of John Fowles's novel. It is one of the scenes that are set in the present, with Meryl Streep and Jeremy Irons playing the actress and actor who are supposed to be the leads in the historical narrative. Meryl Streep, or "Anna", is reading a hook about Victorian England, and is struck by a passage on prostitution in London. She quotes it to Jeremy Irons, or "Mike", with its conclusion: "the prostitutes were receiving clients at a rate of two million per week". Mike does some tapping on his calculator, and deduces that "out-nupt marriage a Victorian gentleman had about two point four fucks a week". As it stands in the recently published screenplay of the film (104pp. Jonathan Cape, £5.50, 0 224 0983 X) this remark could be uttered in a variety of ways. In the film itself there is a strong suggestion of incredulity on Mike's part, as there might well be. The cutting edge of the remark seems to be turned not against Victorian sexual hubbub, but against our modern stereotypes about it.

The scene is the only point at which a very important constituent of Fowles's novel – the discussion of Victorian culture and society – has survived into the film. The three main parties in the affair, Reisz, Pinter and Fowles, have all publicly expressed the view that dropping the historical discussion was a necessary and appropriate consequence of the move from novel to film. It is certainly inconceivable that much of Fowles's dogmatizing about Victorian science, Victorian sex, the

Victorian sense of time, Victorian religious and political attitudes and the rest could have found a place in this film. But the way in which the solitary surviving example is handled by the director and scriptwriter gives me the impression that they were not sorry to be disburdened of all this material.

The Victorian history in the novel is, after all, ridiculously bad. This is not the place to elaborate the point, precisely because the film-makers have had the good sense to jettison the evidence for it. But something may be said about Fowles's discussion of Victorian sexuality, since it leaves its mark on that one scene. To be accurate, the quotation read out by Meryl Streep does not correspond exactly to anything in Fowles's text, though it concurs with Chapter 35 in its estimate of the number of brothels in London, and with the novel generally in its implication that the Victorians were lecherous hypocrites. I do not know if Pinter has invented the quotation (it would shed an interesting light on his approach to the historical material if he had done his own, independent reading – and this seems to be on the cards), but Anna's "book", whether it exists or not, is the equivalent of a source that Fowles keeps citing in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and which he describes as "brilliant", an anthology called *Human Documents of the Victorian Golden Age*, compiled by Edgar Royston Pike.

Pike is a fertile producer of historical and cultural studies. His works include *The World's Strangest Customs*, *Findings Out About the Aztecs*, *Jehovah's Witnesses: Who They Are, What They Teach, What They Do*, *Love in Ancient Rome*, *Human Documents of the Victorian Age* is a better book than these titles might suggest, but is a necessarily skimpy anthology which gives ready encouragement to popular misconceptions about the Victorian period. Reisz and Pinter, we may deduce

from Mike and his calculator, understand the danger more than Fowles, who appears to accept the "like" anthology uncritically, and scarcely looks beyond it (the only other modern study of the Victorian period which he cites is *Providence and Mr Hurly* by Lois Duncan and Terry Coleman, a book whose risible claims about "Triphena Sparkes are even more truly asserted by Fowles than they are by the authors"). The biggest blunder into which the Pike anthology leads Fowles is to use a quotation from Dr George Drysdale on birth control, with typical out-of-date, as if it expressed a Victorian stiffness about sex. He calls his last sentence "telltale". Drysdale says, "Any preventive means, to be satisfactory, must be used by the woman, as it spoils the passion and impulsiveness of the venereal act, if the man has to think of them." But the implication Fowles sees here, that Victorian women were not thought to enjoy sex, cannot be drawn, and is at odds with the whole context of Drysdale's tract of 1854. In reality Drysdale was a remarkable and much-read advocate of unrestricted sexual fulfillment by both sexes, and for him contraception was a means to this end.

A sophisticated defence might be made of the bad history in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and of certain other features of Fowles's authorial digressions. These things, it could be argued, are part of an imitation of Victorian fiction undertaken in the novel. Hence the dogmatic and simplified picture of the recent past – a kind of equivalent for the Victorian attitude to the Regency period, though it is doubtful if any Victorian would have depended on such limited historical sources. Hence, too, the startling snuggles about our own era (which Fowles says provides "inestimable improvements on Victorian benignity"), such as "the terminology of existentialism" which gives ready encouragement to popular misconceptions about the Victorian period. Reisz and Pinter, we may deduce

"We are all in flight from a real reality. That is a basic definition of *Homo sapiens*." Deliberate, if idiosyncratic, imitation of George Eliot?

This is a desperate line of argument. It only sounds convincing when put in general terms. We can speak about the "omniscience" of the author's voice in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and, as all the world knows, or believes, Victorian novelists were omniscient. Etymologically, "omniscient" and "know-all" should mean the same thing, but in practice they bear very different meanings, and there can be no doubt which applies to John Fowles. He has, indeed, a mania for knowledge, for expertise, which betrays itself in all his writing. He is know-all, rather than omniscient, because he cannot hear to seem ignorant, and because he is forever gratuitously intruding specialized information.

But what of the celebrated double ending to *The French Lieutenant's Woman*? Here, admittedly, is a case of ignorance cheerfully endured by the novelist – though it should be said that this very point is made tediously explicit by Fowles, with a good deal of self-satisfied theorizing about the autonomy of his characters (something not available to their poor Victorian counterparts). It is instructive to see what Reisz and Pinter have made of the double ending. In the film the alternative outcomes to the love story – happy and unhappy – are simply added on to the two strands of narrative acted out by Meryl Streep and Jeremy Irons: the Victorian and the modern. The Victorian story ends prosperously for the lovers, and the modern one does not. At least on the face of things, this falls far short of being an equivalent of Fowles's double ending. Instead of a demonstration of the Sartrean priority of existence over essence, we simply get two love stories for the price of one.

It seems like a terrible comedown, but the film-makers may be showing a good instinct here. Those readers of Fowles who are not professional critics (which, given his great popularity, means the overwhelming mass) probably also think of the ending of the novel as offering two love stories for the price of one. Fowles is a good, enjoyable novelist, *indeed* but his real gift is a plain but venerable one. He can tell a story in a way that grips you. It was interesting to hear from Karel Reisz on the *South Bank Show* that he thinks the authorial digressions in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* contribute to the purely narrative interest of the novel, by creating suspense. And, whether or not Reisz and Pinter agree with Fowles about Victorian history and historiography, it is certain that their treatment of the historical comment in the novel converts this, along with the rest of the authorial discourse, into a matter of narrative. It all finds its equivalence in the contemporary plot, of Anna and Mike. This device is accepted by Fowles (in his introduction to the screenplay) as "the only feasible answer" to the problem of rendering the "stereoscopic vision" of the novel on film. It may also correspond to the only true strengths of his text.

So the film of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, judiciously, does no more than tell one story, or two love stories. One is dealt with in detail, the other more sketchily; though the latter, the modern story, includes the former, because acting in it is part of the lives of Anna and Mike. The appeal of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* has the limitations of its aims, however. If you don't like love stories, or these particular ones, you won't like the film. If you do like the stories, the film must satisfy you; for it is cleverly written, faultlessly acted (which is to say too little of Meryl Streep's performance), and directed with tremendous assurance.

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commentary

Should run and run

By Humphrey Carpenter

The Dog Beneath the Skin
New Half Moon Theatre

It seems odd that no one should have mounted a professional production of *Dogskin*, as Auden and Isherwood famously called their first theatrical collaboration, since the original Group Theatre production at the Westminster Theatre in 1936, for the play is certainly important in the history of modern English theatre. For about ten years before writing it, Auden had been trying to create something for the stage that would get away from West End conventions and import some of the vitality he found in cruder forms of drama like country-house charades, Berlin cabaret, pantomime, and mummies' plays. And looking back now, one can see that *Dogskin* did help to begin a revolution in English dramatic style, even if it did not get going until much later. (Auden and Isherwood themselves lost their nerve after writing the play, and in their two others gradually slipped back into conventional theatrical mannerisms.)

It may be that *Dogskin* has languished so long because on the printed page much of it looks rather silly. Auden's choruses are as magnificently eye-catching as anything he wrote, but the scenes they introduce seem very thin in print. The play was published by Faber's in 1935, some months before the first performances, and the reviews at this point were on the whole hostile – the *TLS*, for example, called it an "undergraduate rag". But when it appeared on the stage, the response was very different: "One of the best plays of the season" (*Daily Worker*), "charged with both wit and beauty" (*Observer*), "ought to run for five years" (*Sunday Times*). This was not because of the quality of Rupert Doone's production, which by all accounts was wooden. It is simply that on stage the play works magnificently.

We owe this discovery, or rediscovery, to Julian Sands's New Half Moon production, which in conception if not always in execution must be all that Auden and Isherwood could have desired. Sands has chosen to stress the play's political content – his designer, Philip Myall, has created a backdrop on which a typical 1930s riotous motif, symbol of bourgeois suburban comfort, is being encroached upon by tom newspapers and fifties – but he has not done this at the expense of the poetry. Anyone who knows the play will pale when, at the very beginning, the opening chorus is slashed to pieces, so that some of Auden's best lines ("Calm at this moment the Dutch sea so shallow / That sunk St Paul's would ever show its golden cross...") are thrown away in the interests of getting on with the story. But this is the only point at which the verse has been crudely sacrificed. For the rest of the evening, it takes its place at the centre of the play, and Sands somehow manages to make Auden's magnificent but often ornate choral speeches cohere with the action. Auden himself came to think that this was impossible; nearly forty years after writing the play, he declared that the choruses were merely self-indulgence. But the Half Moon Company work them into the body of the play. They rarely just recite them; they chant them, croon them, shout them, whisper them, act them out, and (most important) share them among all the players, cast rather than making them the special property of a chorus speaker or speakers. This is certainly the way to do it.

Jonathan Rathbone's music has the right touch of Weller, bringing out the play's undoubted debt to the *Thespian Opera*. It is no mean feat to set some of Auden's rhythmically angular lyrics, keep the words audible, and at the same time produce attractive tunes. The company's singing, which varies from shouting to inaudibility, is not always up to it, and they don't dance well enough, but the musical numbers have the required energy.

It is Tim Potter's evening. Though the Half Moon's programme is so egalitarian that it merely lists the actors in alphabetical order and does not divulge who plays what, the front of house staff were very willing to reveal that he is the tall, gangling performer who gives magnificently epic interpretations of the Vicar ("Here is a tin of Church of England mince / Just to show you that our friendship is a fixture") and many more characters, including Madame bubbi, the *disease* who renders a song which Auden himself like to perform in drag: "On the Rhonda / My time I squander / Watching for my minor boy." Potter's mop of fair hair makes him look exactly like a juvenile Stephen Spender, while Tony Taylor as Alan Norman, the simple-minded quest hero, with his slicked-down boyish hair and flannel suit, conjures up Isherwood; so that by the time that Max Gold climbs out of the dogskin and reveals himself as the long-lost Sir Francis Crewe, one is tempted to see a resemblance between this charmingly aggressive person in shirt-sleeves and the young Auden.

Three scenes in the second half are severe tests of the director and performers. The Half Moon passes all of them. The cabaret at the Nineveh Hotel finds Sands shandening most of the text, giving the M.C. an impromptu mind-reading act which involves audience participation, and presenting Destructive Desmond, whose specialty is staging priceless works of art, as a kind of lunatic Maurice Chevalier. (Desmond, incidentally, proved so difficult to bring off in the 1936 Group Theatre production that Rupert Doone decided to cut him entirely; at the Half Moon, as played by Richard Johnson he is one of the best things of the evening.) Alan's amours with the tollor's dummy, Miss Lou Vipond, look unstageable in the printed text, but Sands turns this episode into an erotic nightmare, with the cast miming sex-acts around the head on which Alan languishes with the limless dummy. And the Vicar's speech to the Lads of Pressan Ambo – again, cut entirely by Doone – takes its place in Sands's production as an outlandish self-exposure of the spiritual-psychological rottenness in English society.

Sands even manages what the authors couldn't: to provide an ending. (Auden and Isherwood tried three or four different versions, none of which seems to have worked.) At the Half Moon, after Alan and Francis have abandoned the decaying Pressan for "the army of the other side", we see the villagers write in a demonic possession which finally leaves them grovelling on the ground as dogs. The Vicar spreads his arms and throws his head back in a kind of crazy self-circumcision, while his features taoten, the teeth and eyeballs protruding horribly, so that we are reminded of Eliot's lines from which the play's title was taken: "Webster was much possessed by death / And saw the skull beneath the skin." Then, quietly, comes the Epilogue: not the lines Auden wrote for the play, but the closing words of the "September 1, 1939" poem, that in a world of stupor, humanity should "Show an affirming flame".

The *Dog Beneath the Skin* continues at the New Half Moon, 213 Mile End Road, E1, until December 5. The theatre's children's show, *The Wizard of Oz*, adapted from Hans Christian Andersen by Michael Seymour, opens on December 14, showing twice daily (at 2.00pm and 7.00pm), until Christmas, and afterwards at matinees only.

When the music stops

By Stanley Wells

All's Well That Ends Well
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford

Trevor Nunn celebrates Peggy Ashcroft's return to Shakespeare and to Stratford with a brilliant, confident production of one of Shakespeare's more subdued and troubled comedies. The costumes are Edwardian hoth in design and in lavish multiplicity. John Gunter's elegant basic set of white arches with glass panels and roof, initially suggesting a conservatory, is marvellously adaptable. Each episode is firmly localized. The first court scene takes place in a gymnasium, the young lords fencing and vaulting, their rude health contrasting with the King's physical weakness; but they listen respectfully to his analysis of the virtues of Bertram's father. For the second court scene we are in a clubland – the men in evening dress; green shaded lamps, brandy glasses and soda syphons on the gaming tables. "Firenze", a sign announces, and the set becomes a railway station which is also a transit camp – tennis appear in the background – and later a field-hospital noisily close to the firing-line. There is a splendid, on-stage hand for the procession of the French army ("Drum and colours, Enter Count Rosillon, Parolles, and the whole army" says the Folio direction). Then we are in a café, the dishes of the day chalked on a blackboard; here the blindfolded Parolles is interrogated, horrific instruments of torture suggested by the scritch of a fork on a tin plate. All is elegance again for the final scene, as champagne flows for the King's visit to the Countess.

Transitions between scenes, helped by Guy Woolfenden's evocative musical pastiches, are smooth and ingenious. Travelling becomes a visual and aural motif. We realize how full of comings and goings the play is as cars rev their engines and characters dress for journeys, depart with their suitcases, and re-enter with them, too, even into the royal presence.

Such specificity is inherently entertaining, and often illuminating. It suits the play's psychological naturalism, the qualities that caused Shaw to compare it with *A Doll's House* and its heroine with Nora. We are made acutely aware of its concern with embarrassment; Helena's as she is provoked to confess her love for

Bertram, the courtiers' at Bertram's rejection of her, Parolles's when the handbag is removed from his eyes and he sees that he is in the presence of those he has slandered, Bertram's at his parting from Helena, refusing her request for a kiss, and, climactically, when faced with the evidence of his own perfidy. A place is created within the play's updated structure for the clown, Lavache. At Stratford in 1959 Tyrone Guthrie, also updating, funked him altogether. Nunn has Geoffrey Hutchings play him as a physically deformed appendage of the Countess's household, sweeping the floor, occasionally entrusted with messages. Peggy Ashcroft exquisitely defines an indulgent tolerance of his winking and blinking presence, treating him as a simpleton with his own kind of shrewdness and a power to amuse. For once, and with her help, his set-piece on "O Lord, Sir" becomes genuinely comic.

The precision of Dame Peggy's characterization shifts the balance of her role away from poetic generality to personal expression. "Even so it was with me when I was young" is not as Edith Evans made it) a meditation but a statement. This is a practical woman, warm in her sympathies but capable of ironic detachment, most moving in the little scene (3.4) with her Steward (Bert Parolles) in which she expresses the dilemma of her divided affections and confesses her grief.

Best of all, perhaps, the naturalism works in the relationship of Bertram and Parolles, which becomes the most interesting in the play. Mike Gwilym portrays Bertram initially as a callow cad, affectionate and respectful towards his mother but over-dominated by Parolles. His evident immaturity assists the credibility of his response to Helena's choice of him for a husband. The director builds to this moment with great skill and care. The King, in high good humour, stage-manages a parade of the young lords before Helena, and in an enchantingly pretty sequence of dances she eliminates them one by one each time the music stops, until only Bertram remains. He has joined cheerfully in the game, but anger and resentment supervene as the King enforces Helena's decision; Bertram's submission is petulant. The scene, excellent though it is, would be stronger if Helena's humiliation were more forcefully conveyed. At its end Bertram takes Parolles's cheerio from his mouth, tries to smoke it, but chokes and gives up. The handling of the exposure of Parolles is notable no less for the subtlety of its comedy

than for the grief and disillusionment it arouses in Bertram, and for the reality which Stephen Moore gives to Parolles's determination to survive.

If, until the play's last moments, Bertram seems more interesting in relation to Parolles than to Helena, it is partly because the production style is less than ideally suited to some aspects of Helena's role. Harriet Walter's performance, carefully studied, graceful, often touching, nevertheless misses some of its poetic power. She is not helped by having to deliver the incantatory couplets with which she works upon the King's table full of brandy glasses. John Franklyn-Robbins makes a fine moment of the acknowledgement of weakness in his subdued acceptance of her help.

Diana, too, is diminished by being carefully particularized; the role loses some of the symbolical aspects hinted at in the name. It is not impossible that an attractive girl who sings seductive songs, dances and shows her petticoats to soldiers in a café should take pride in her chastity, but it is difficult to believe that she should be "of a most chaste renown" in the camp. In the final scene, however, Cheryl Campbell gives Diana a dignity which rebukes the coarseness of Bertram's taunts. Here the production's psychological realism reaps its rewards in a complex counterpointing of emotions. Parolles is despicable, yet Lafew a beautifully poised performance by Robert Eddison) is generous to him; Bertram is contemptible, but we have seen that he can learn from experience, and Helena forgives him. If his progress to maturity is halting, yet he is willing at last to accept Helena as a wife in reality as well as in name, and to ask her for pardon. The Epilogue is dropped in this production. As the lights fade, Helena and Bertram are left alone, tentatively touching hands. There is still no kiss. A precarious rapport has been achieved; the ending may also be a beginning.

The RSC begins its final period at the Aldwych and Warehouse theatres in January, before moving to its new home at the Barbican Centre in May. The London première of Schützler's *La Ronde*, translated by John Barton and Sue Davies, opens on January 11. It is joined on February 12 by Ostrovsky's *The Forest*, transferring from widely acclaimed seasons in the company's smaller theatres. Also in the Aldwych repertoire are *As You Like It*, *Richard II* and *Richard III*.

Commentary continues on p.1403.

Among this week's contributors

J. S. BRATTON is the author of *Wilton's Music Hall*, 1980.

RICHARD CALVOCCI is a research assistant at the Tate Gallery. His *Magritte* was published in 1979.

J. M. CAMERON's books include *Images of Authority*, 1966.

HUMPHREY CARPENTER's books include *W. H. Auden: A Biography*.

D. J. ENRIGHT is the editor of *The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse 1945-1980*, 1980.

H. S. FRANK's most recent book is *The Disease of Government*, 1978.

CELINA FOX is Curator of Pictures, Prints and Drawings at the Museum of Modern Art.

MARK GREGUARO's most recent book is *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, 1981.

PHYLLIS GROSVENOR is working on a biography of Melanie Klejo.

PETER CONRAD's books include *Romantic Opera and Literary Form*, 1977, and *Imagining America*, 1980.

ALAN JANKINS is one of the 1981 Eric Gregory Poetry Award winners.

JONATHAN KEATES teaches English at the City of London School.

HERMONA LEE's *Elizabeth Bowen - An Examination* was reviewed in the *TLS* on November 13.

MARY LARKOWITZ is the author of *The Lives of the Greek Poets* and a collection of essays on Greek and Roman Women, *Heroines and Hysterics*, both of which are published by Duckworth this week.

CHARLES MADGE is the author with Peter Willmott of *Inner City Poverty in Paris and London*, 1981.

LUCY MAIR's books include *Marriage, 1971 and African Kingdoms*.

MICHAEL MASON is a lecturer in English at University College London.

TIM MASON teaches Modern History at St Peter's College, Oxford and is an editor of *History Workshop Journal*.

WILFRID MELLARS's books include *Twilight of the Gods: the Beatles in Reinterpretation*, 1973, and *Back and the Dance of God*, 1981.

KENNETH MINOUE's books include *Nottingham, 1967 and The Concept of a University*, 1973.

ELTON E. MORISON is the author of *From Know-How to Nowhere*, 1975.

JAN MORRIS's books include *Places*, 1972, and *Travels*, 1976.

STEPHEN PLAICE's latest translation, with his brother Neville, is of *Tenured Doris's Merlin*.

J. M. RICHARDS was Editor of *The Architectural Review* from 1937 to 1971.

CAROL RUMENS's most recent collection of poems is *Unemployed Music*, 1981.

GAMINI SALOOO is Professor of English at the University of Exeter.

T. A. SHUPPA's books include a study of *Beowulf*, 1979. He is Professor of English Language at the University of Leeds.

HUGH TINKER's latest book is *The Ordeal of Love: C. F. Andrews and India*, 1980.

D. C. WATT is Professor of International History at the London School of Economics.

STANLEY WELLS is General Editor of the *Oxford Shakespeare*.

LARZER ZIFF is Caroline Denon Professor of English at Johns Hopkins University.

'Covering Islam'

Sir, - Readers of the *TLS* who may have seen M. E. Yapp's review of my *Covering Islam* (October 9) should be warned that what they saw was ideological fiction masquerading (as is often the case) as scholarly judgment. Yapp is a conservative Orientalist by profession. In having assigned the review to him the *TLS* was determining the result politically, since it is Yapp's guild and its peculiar habits that I was criticizing in this book and in *Orientalism*.

Yapp does not merely trivialize and avoid the issues I raise: he also quite literally manufactures evidence to suit his polemic, and in the process shows himself to be quite incapable of conducting intellectual debate. This is a chronic malady of his field, perfectly exemplified by what he does in his review.

Take some specifics as an instance. He says that I give the impression of having done my research well but then claims that when some of my references are checked, the opposite conclusion is bound to be reached. As proof he gives two examples. He mentions an article that I discuss as typical of inflammatory press coverage of the Islamic world; it appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on December 12, 1979, and its author was Edmund Besworth. The title of that article – which I have before me – is "Jihad: Concept of Holy War Gains Respectability in Iran". In my book I say that Bosworth attempts clumsily to show that most of Islamic history ("the idea is as old as Islam itself") can be read "as emanating from the Muslim call for jihad", the point being that Muslims have always been addicted to violence. The second paragraph of Bosworth's article states that "Jihad has seemed an anachronism. It has seemed as improbable as a contemporary Crusade to restore Cathelic Christendom in the eastern Mediterranean would be today. Now we cannot be sure." He then goes on to conclude that the Ayatollah's call for a jihad has a great potential for destabilization and violence, and that this shows how easily this cry can incite people to action. In my criticism of Bosworth's badly distorted view of Islamic thought, I quote from an eminent Muslim scholar, Fazlur Rahman, to show that the concept of jihad was far less central and uncontroverted than Bosworth suggested to his readers.

Undeterred by any of this, Yapp reads a story by Bosworth in *Newsday* (I called, he says, "Will Iran Launch a Holy War") and has the cool nerve to say that this is the article I discuss, despite the fact that I fully identify Bosworth's piece as being in the *Los Angeles Times*. To labour the point still further: what I talked about – and quoted from – was an article in another newspaper by the same person, an article that arrived at quite unmistakable conclusions, which Yapp disputes by alleging that Bosworth thinks jihad is unlikely. In fairness to Yapp one should add that given his inability to refer to what I referred to, as well as his happy gift for substituting items of his own choice, he cannot be expected to come to ordinary commonsensical conclusions. But why does he rant on in a tone of moral superiority? Surely he can't expect your readers to believe that he is a serious scholar and that I am not?

Item two concerns the drift I impute to an article by Ernest Conize, also in the *Los Angeles Times*, in which Conize places more emphasis on the Shah's perceived offences against Islam than on others. I said that if you read Conize attentively you will note that he assumes silently, and then demonstrates actively, that the West is advancing Islam backward. Conize goes on to argue that what the Shah did offended Iranians "not just because his police tortured people, but also because he took away government subsidies from Moslem holy men". Even the phrase "holy men" carries more significance to the context of the argument about why "the loss of Iran" was bad for the United States, and

the "free world" than the word "clerics". If Islam is underdeveloped and if the Revolution was "a widespread revolt against the unsettling influences" of Westernization, then it must be that in their Islamic hearts Iranians were more offended by specifically anti-Islamic actions like depriving "holy men" of their subsidies than by commonplace, not specifically Islamic, offences like torture. This is what Conize wants his readers to understand because the entire gist of his article was supported by the prevailing context in the United States when he wrote.

Now given that Yapp tries to pass off a text of his own for one that I discuss, it is pretty likely that he will not be able to deal with things like the interpretation and the drift. Exactly: he cannot. He does a bit of huffing about "what [Suid] would say to a student who perpetrated so elementary an error in a comprehension test" and then having already failed the test once, he fails it again for good measure. In fine, Yapp is an inept literalist when I am talking about tendency and implication, and the crudeness of falsifiers when a specific item is in question.

If these two examples illustrate the level of Yapp's specific analyses, then it is almost certain that his general views are going to be worse and, what is more important, much less accurate. That is indeed the case. With a bit of shabby innuendo he refers slyly to my "familiar intellectual position", shewing his lack of familiarity with anything resembling my position, and then makes a couple of unsupported negative remarks about *Orientalism*. In addition he accuses me of opacity in defining "Islam" (this from a reviewer who hasn't the wit to remark that the whole point of my book is that to all intents and purposes "Islam" cannot and ought not to be defined), and then goes on to say that I capriciously attack scholars for their views (whereas in the case of the two that he objects to, Bernard Lewis and Leonard Binder, I criticize them for not having any views, only attitudes and a guild that they wish to protect). Knowing as little about the United States as he does about media coverage, he confuses my description of opportunistic press hulla-balloo about "Islam" during the hostage crisis with another fiction of his invention, "US agitation".

And so on. I take the trouble to correct some of Yapp's most egregious errors only to indicate again what may not have been obvious: that Yapp is extremely ignorant and is no quarter from which to expect accuracy in reading or skill in interpretation. For if Orientalists cannot deal with the actualities of their own language and culture, how then can they be trusted when they write about societies they only know through books?

EDWARD W. SAID.

Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University in the City of New York, New York, NY 10027.

'Paradigms Lost'

Sir, - J. O. Thompson (Letters, November 13) claims that my argument against the sentence-adverbial use of "hopefully" based on its vagueness is a rationalization, and that I and others who dislike it should admit that we "just don't like it". I freely admit that even if its usage were not vague, I would still not like it.

I have no defence to Bernard Bergonzi's observation that having castigated others for using "their" to refer to a singular antecedent I proceeded to make the same solecism. I was aware that the criticism of one's prose invites comment on one's own and my mistake serves only to prove how hard it is to write the Queen's English. I trust there is some copy editor at the *TLS* who is feeling as contrite as I do.

STUART SUTHERLAND.
Centre for Research on Perception and Cognition, University of Sussex.

'The Bookshops of London'

Sir, - If Martha Reikling Pease had concentrated on booksellers rather than bookshops her book (reviewed by Lindsay Duguid on November 13) would necessarily have been several times as big. Since the war specialist booksellers have exchanged shops with rapidly escalating overheads for cheaper but more spacious premises elsewhere from which to run mail-order or by-appointment businesses.

We ourselves have over 100,000 books in our special fields, a stock which could not be housed economically in shop premises. Many more booksellers, including part-timers, work from their homes.

Consequently, London is rather better served by booksellers than one would gather from Ms Pease's book, since these specialist booksellers are widely known and have a reputation for being well-informed and helpful.

RONALD GRAY.
Hammersmith Books, Barnes High Street, London SW13.

'Churchill and de Gaulle'

Sir, - Like the twelve other reviewers who have so far commented on *Churchill and de Gaulle*, Douglas Johnson is extremely generous in his praise (November 6). Unlike the twelve others, however, he introduces a measure of (friendly) criticism on certain aspects of the story. I would therefore like to exercise the traditional *droit de réponse* in commenting upon his remarks.

I will not dwell on the statement that "François Kersaudy is probably mistaken in approaching his subject with a degree of sentimentalism". One might perhaps be pardoned for thinking that it would not do to write in an unsentimental way of such a desperately sentimental character as Winston Churchill; that his sentimentalism could easily blend with expediency, unfairness or even machiavellianism, is of course indisputable. But no one, and abundantly documented in the book. The remark that I "have not looked at all the diplomatic and military papers which Churchill saw and which influenced his attitudes towards de Gaulle" is difficult to comment upon. I have consulted all military and diplomatic papers available to researchers during the period 1977-79, and it seems safe to assume that Churchill saw rather more than these. His own archives would be of course extremely helpful in this respect.

Professor Johnson goes on to state: "Kersaudy claims that Churchill probably knew about de Gaulle before he met him, since Reynaud had mentioned him... In a conversation they had had in March 1938; unfortunately, no reference is given in the book to support this supposition. In fact, it is not a mere supposition, and a reference is given to support it. The relevant passage in the book reads (pp 32-33): "Churchill was again in Paris at the end of March 1938... At the time, he also conferred with Paul Reynaud, who tried to persuade him of the efficiency of armoured divisions. This is when Churchill first heard of Colonel de Gaulle and his theories on armoured divisions." It seemed, Churchill later recalled, "that a Colonel de Gaulle had written a much criticized book about the offensive power of modern armoured vehicles". Note 32 clearly indicates the origin of this quotation: "W. Churchill, *The Second World War* (Casell, London, 1947), vol. I, p 220".

It is rather difficult to follow Professor Johnson when he states that in June 1940 "Churchill perhaps thought that he was greeting one of the most important officers of the French army, when in fact he was welcoming a largely unknown and

junior general who was considered by those who knew him to be a controversial character with regrettable political ties." For one thing, it is not clear who those people were who considered him as such. Indeed, precious few Frenchmen – and even fewer Englishmen – had heard of his "regrettable political ties"; and besides, what "regrettable political ties" are we talking about? De Gaulle had been in touch with just about every political party (the Communists excepted) in his campaign to gain support for the *Armée de métier*, and Churchill could not have been impressed by vague reports of the General's past ties with the *Action Française* or any other right-wing group. Indeed, being well acquainted with French political life in the inter-war years, Churchill knew that the French were all too apt to brand anyone who was slightly right of centre as Fascist, just as anyone who was slightly left of centre was inevitably dismissed as a Communist. Seen against this background, in fact, Georges Mandel was probably right in describing de Gaulle as "an untarnished man", and there is no reason to think that Churchill considered him otherwise.

Furthermore, the first part of Professor Johnson's remark that "Churchill perhaps thought that he was greeting one of the most important officers of the French army, when in fact he was welcoming a largely unknown and junior general" seems to neglect the fact that de Gaulle was until June 16 France's Under-Secretary for National Defence, and had been negotiating with the British precisely in that capacity. In other words, there was at least one good reason why Churchill would not consider Paul Reynaud's Under-Secretary for National Defence as just another obscure French general. But another consideration is perhaps more important still: by June 17, 1940, Churchill had no use for French political bickering, military hierarchy or the notoriety of French personalities; France was crumbling, Britain was in mortal peril, and my Frenchman willing to fight alongside Britain was to be greeted with open arms. That particular Frenchman happened to be called General de Gaulle.

Finally, Professor Johnson writes towards the end of his article: "It is curious that François Kersaudy... should pursue the unauthenticated story put about by Churchill that when he saw de Gaulle at the Prefecture in Tours... he said to him, in a low voice and in French, 'l'Homme du destin'." The best answer to this is probably to reproduce the relevant passage in the book, and let the reader decide for himself. The date: June 13, 1940; at the Prefecture in Tours, the Supreme War Council was drawing to an end: "There can be no doubt that Churchill was terribly disappointed with Paul Reynaud; the latter was clinging only to the hope of American help, and had not once talked of continuing the war in North Africa, thus making a giant stride towards capitulation. In his disappointment, Churchill seems to have been casting about for an energetic personality, and the image of de Gaulle came to his mind. In the garden of the Prefecture, during the pause, he asked General Spears about de Gaulle; Spears said he was certain that de Gaulle 'was completely staunch'. The idea must then have continued to travel in Churchill's mind, as evidenced by what happened after the conference: 'As we went down the crowded passage into the courtyard', Churchill later wrote, 'I saw General de Gaulle standing still and expressionless at the doorway. Greeting him, I said in a low tone, in French: "l'Homme du destin". He remained impassive."

De Gaulle's aide-de-camp, Geoffroy de Courcel, who was standing next to the General, did not bear these prophetic words. Did de Gaulle hear them? No. I didn't, the General later answered, and he added: "You know: Churchill is a romantic type." After all, Churchill spoke in a low tone, and the distance between the Prime Minister's mouth and the General's ear was not inconsiderable; but being a romantic type, Churchill may have had, then and there, the intuition that he had before him the very model of the historic figure, who remains unruffled when others panic, simple, reserved, resolved, *"sans peur et sans reproche"*.

Regardless of all that, the book must certainly suffer from many imperfections, as anyone who has read Chapter 17 will probably be quick to point out. I would of course be extremely grateful to anyone who could inform me of such errors and omissions, or contribute additional information on the whole subject.

FRANÇOIS KERSAUDY.
7 rue Ruhmkorff, Paris 75017.

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FRANÇOIS KERSAUDY.
7 rue Ruhmkorff, Paris 75017.

'My Dearest Love'

Sir, - From the tone of D. J. Enright's letter of November 13 one might imagine that in publishing a limited edition of Wordsworth's recently discovered love-letters the Trustees of Dove Cottage were in conflict with Chatto and Windus. In fact, of course, the Trustees are not only delighted that a popular edition is appearing in the spring, they positively arranged that it should be so. The two volumes concerned have the same editor, Beth Darlington (herself an Associate Trustee), but are otherwise very different. *My Dearest Love* is setting on its beauty and rarity, and the pleasure of reading these touching letters in facsimile, with all their dashes and crossings-out and hesitations. The popular edition will sell, as Mr Enright points out, because it is annotated and inexpensive, and contains mere material. For good measure, the letters will also be appearing in the standard Oxford edition. The Trustees make no bones about needing the money that *My Dearest Love* can provide, but they have exploited no one.

JONATHAN WORDSWORTH.
Chairman, The Trustees of Dove Cottage, St Catherine's College, Oxford.

'History and Imagination'

Sir, - I regret to say that my review of *History and Imagination* (November 20) contains an error which is quite inexplicable, even to me, and which I did not notice until the issue had gone to press. I complained (mildly, I hope) that the book did not contain a contribution from T. C. Barnard, when it very obviously did; on "Sir William Petty, Irish Landowner". Will you please publish this correction, and give me the opportunity to offer my apologies to Dr Barnard, and, of course, to the Editor?

J. P. KENYON.
Department of Modern History, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Fife, Scotland KY16 9AL.

Letters to the editor continue overleaf

The *Cambridgeshire* of *Rupert Brooke*, in which the place, mentioned in the poem "Granchester" are illustrated by drawings (one of them reproduced in our issue of November 6) and described in the accompanying text, is published by its author and artist, Denis Chason, 4 Primrose Lane, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire CB5 9UH.

Cambridge University Press, the publishers of *The Sophistic Movement* by G. B. Kerferd, which was reviewed in the November 6 issue of the *TLS* would like us to point out that the book is also available in a paperback version, priced at £4.95 (184pp, 0 521 28357 4).

to the editor

'Country'

Sir, - I have only just seen Kenneth O. Morgan's review (October 30) of *Country*, Trevor Griffiths's play for BBC television, and was fascinated by the judgment: "But like other historically-based television ventures, this work simply isn't historical." On May 23, 1980 you published a review of my book *The Private Life of a Country House*, which describes a house and household comparable to the one in the play. Because of this the BBC asked me to advise them on some details for a supposed family reunion taking place in 1945. They wanted to ascertain what could have been done in those days of rationing and restrictions.

I met four bright and charming young people and we had a hilarious lunch during which I shot down some of their ideas but confirmed that you could have put up a good show, getting out the best glass and silver and drinking excellent wine laid down in the cellar before the war. A butler, disabled for any more strenuous occupation, was perfectly in order, and indeed my mother had just such a one at that date. I was astonished, however, at their reaction when I pointed out some of the things the family could not have had or done. "But these were very rich people who had everything," they said. Politely though they were, they seemed not to believe that hardly anyone could get round the restrictions, or wanted to, and I see now that the author's conception was not to be upset by mere fact. Country-house life insulated from the effects of several years of total war which bore on the whole population was to be presented amid carefully researched period detail.

I never came across such families as the Carletons, either personally or professionally. Working in a firm of solicitors, I spent much of my time on upheavals in the lives of clients whose mainstays had been removed by active service or death, their houses requisitioned, their finances wrecked, and their homes filled with evacuees just as the call-up removed their staffs. The greater the pre-war commitments the greater the difficulties were likely to be, and particularly in the Home Counties; Kent, the setting for *Country*, gave rise to some of the most difficult situations,

and was even more heavily beleaguered than my own native Essex. I was sorry that so well acted a play should have presented so false a picture of a time in which class was irrelevant. I never have quite known how or why we won the war, but we certainly should not have done so if such people as the Carletons had been typical. Evidently television plays, however correct their detail, are no more reliable as documentary evidence than that familiar genre, the historical romance.

LESLEY LEWIS.

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Dostoevsky and the Jews

Sir, - Letters to you about the Jewish fireman in *Crime and Punishment* have left some basic questions unanswered: why a Jew, and why a fireman? Reasons can be found in the book and among the author's notes. Svidrigailov, who with arcane humanism selects the fireman as "witness" to his suicide, is not a fully independent character. Dostoevsky himself allegorically represents Raskolnikov's "despair, most cynical", as Sonya was the hero's "hope, most unreluctant". Early variants included a minor "incendiary" motif: "the 'Christ' chapter... ends with a fire", "the fire determined everything". In the final version Raskolnikov rescues two children from a fire, but this is only alluded to (Epilogue). Dostoevsky's editors made him cut the "Christ chapter" by half because of its "millennialism". Possibly the fire was an act of anarchic terrorism (quite contemporary) for which the hero was responsible. Raskolnikov is indeed pushed in this direction by Svidrigailov's cynically bleak views of Petersburg society, incitements which the hero finds "inflammatory" (VI, 4). His despairing but malicious *after-ego* focuses contempt on "youngsters" crippled by theories" (ie. Raskolnikov himself) and "Vids who come from somewhere, hiding away money while everything else sinks into depravity" (ibid.). Here Dostoevsky perhaps flirted with his own pathology. However, the antisemitism is assigned to the novel's most vicious character (Cynicism personified).

representing the hero's worst self. Thus the ethnic slight cuts two ways.

The Jewish theme acquires broader perspective when Sonya declines the story of Lazarus in Raskolnikov (the "Christ chapter"). As Svidrigailov listens next door, her reading gives special emphasis (italicized in the text) to Jews (Judea) who witness the miracles of Jesus with varied responses ranging from conversion to scepticism, hostility, and betrayal. Some citizens of Judea, like Svidrigailov and Raskolnikov, cannot bear witness to the miracles of Christ, cannot accept literally the Old Testament idea of man's divine image. (The name of Sonya's landlord, Capernaum, symbolizes the same biblical theme.) In the novel, Raskolnikov's Christ-seeking is complicated by dementia, and Svidrigailov plays out the hero's unaltered, self-destructive potentials. He is an Anti-Christ whose suicide provokes crucifixion. His chosen Jewish witness, a vainly and debauched (in "Achilles helmet") of the heroic or godlike element in humanity, his "eternal sorrow" mirrors and reinforces the ultimate despair of Svidrigailov.

Dostoevsky himself in his last decade suffered (as memoirs testify) from fluctuating paranoid delusions of the advent of Antichrist in Russia. Xenophobic variants of this tendency can be traced back to his early manhood. Probably the sporadic anti-semitic outbursts of his last fifteen years were rooted in the same racial illness (which might now be diagnosed as schizophreniform psychosis, a syndrome linked to epilepsy, complete with hallucinations). This does nothing to differentiate such expression from any other antisemitism, unfortunately. And yet, the pointed and controlled use of symbolic references to Jews in *Crime and Punishment* suggests not an unconscious outcropping of symptoms, but conscious self-analysis, diagnosis, control and judgment of the author's personality - like much else that one finds in the fiction of Dostoevsky. Probably the truth of the case can never be proven.

JAMES L. RICE.

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Edgar Allan Poe

Sir, - James Melville (October 30) is printed as saying, "Edgar Allan Poe's short life had already ended some years before when, in 1845, the Japanese reluctantly resumed international contacts." A misprint for 1854 has made Poe's short life (1809-49) even shorter.

EDWARD LE COMTE.

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Pangrams

Sir, - John Sturrock's review of the *Atlas de littérature potentielle* (October 16) was engaging but I am surprised that he accepts the notion that the shortest English pangram is "the quick brown fox" (32 letters). My children's magnetic alphabet clings to the fridge door and - after hours of expantion and a statistically abnormal incidence of patella disorders - friends and family have identified at least two shorter ones, viz:

Given mazy web of phlox, duck quits jar (31);
Judge vomit few quiz pharynx block (30)

Does either merit an entry in the Oulipo map?

DAVID HUNTER.

38 Moggs Mead, Petersfield, Hampshire GU31 4NX.

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People of standstill

By Hugh Tinker

BRIAN MAY:

The Third World Calamity
274pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£8.95
0 7100 0764 7

Brian May is an Australian journalist with a specialized knowledge of the Afro-Asian world. From his personal experience he produced a lucid and convincing account of the economic growth and the abolition of economic growth in South-East Asia's largest country. He has followed that book, *The Indonesian Tragedy*, with the present more ambitious work which attempts to explain why economic and political development (as many would argue) has failed to "take off" in the Third World.

Thirty, even twenty years ago, Western economists and Afro-Asian political leaders were agreed that with the departure of the Western colonial powers the "New Nations" would enter a new phase of rapid economic development. Over-hasty comparisons were made with Britain's industrial revolution and even more with the infant United States in its advance to the front rank of industrial powers. The thesis was associated particularly with W. W. Rostow and the theory of "The Take-Off Into Sustained Growth". It was believed that all that was needed was a "pump-priming" operation: if Third World countries could not mobilize capital resources as Britain's entrepreneurs had done in the eighteenth century, then the United States and the other advanced industrial nations should provide the necessary "pump-priming" resources as an act of enlightened self-interest. The West came up with aid (and even more lavishly with "expert" advice), but aid seemed only to lead to demands for more aid; and still the expected "take-off" didn't come. Some Third World countries actually seemed to be getting poorer. The West lost interest, and when the Brandt Commission's report appeared it was received with scepticism and even indifference.

Brian May is by no means indifferent to the plight of the Third World, but he does feel that its troubles are mainly its own fault. He rejects the neo-Marxist thesis of "Under-development" which says that the West, by its exploitation, has prevented the Third World from breaking out of poverty. His own explanation is largely found in the inherited cultures of Asia and Africa. He focuses especially upon Iran and Nigeria, of which he has personal experience, while also giving coverage to India, as the largest democracy in the world. His argument is broadly similar to Max Weber's famous theory of the Protestant Ethic. He does not deny that in pre-colonial times the products of Asia (and also Africa) were of outstanding quality, much in demand in Europe, but he does insist that their governments and social values were destructive of capitalist enterprise. Coming to the present, he sees the Third World as enmeshed in a conflict between a traditional "mass" and a semi-Westernized "elite". The traditional economy is dominated by the bazaar, in which the main consideration is immediate profit or loss. The elite often control sizeable material resources and also the levers of power: as do the military and the political bureaucrats in Nigeria, and as the Shah's henchmen used to in Iran. Yet they themselves are only superficially imbued with the Western ethos and respond much more to tradition: as in their manipulation of national wealth for their own personal ends. The "only development" they promote is a kind of transplanted Western artefact, imported industrialization, which has no impact on the traditional sector. This "enclave" economy brings affluence to a few but leaves the mass untouched. The Afro-Asian condition, then, is one of stagnation. Again, the parallel with nineteenth-century

German ideas is interesting: Ranke and other German historians saw Asians as "people of eternal standstill."

But wait: the Japanese are Asians, and so are Koreans and the Chinese of Taiwan and Singapore. They seem to be forging ahead: cultural stagnation hasn't afflicted them. May does briefly mention Japan right at the end of his book. He finds its economic breakthrough a "mystery", and he is at a loss for a coherent explanation. He doubts if the answer lies in "racial differences in intelligence", though he believes that "the existence of racial and psychic difference is obvious". His last word is one of warning: maybe the irrationality which has thwarted development in the Third World is starting to afflict the West also.

This is a book based on extensive research and personal inquiry and reflection; but it doesn't really take us much further. One recalls a similar inquiry by a man with a much greater international reputation: Gunnar Myrdal, whose three-volume *Asian Drama* came up with conclusions no more enlightening. Myrdal suggested that India's economic failings arose from its political shortcomings as a "Soft State". He refrained from suggesting that it should become a "Hard State". Quasi-scholarly generalizations about the Third World thus far are not much more than a self-revelation of Western beliefs and prejudices.

One does not have to be a Marxist of the Dependency school to suggest that any explanation of growth or decline which differentiates "the Third World" and "the West" as separate entities must be inadequate. The arguments which May applies to the Third World apply almost equally to the West. It is difficult to assign South Africa its place, but certainly White South Africans claim that their country belongs to the West. Yet here is an outstanding example of an enclave economy. White capitalism provides highly valued products for the West and obtains affluence thereby, while the Black mass stagnates and starves. Is this because of Black cultural inadequacy or perhaps because of White hegemony?

May sees India as an economic mess. However, if two-thirds of India's population live on or below the poverty datum line, one-third - hundreds of millions - are beginning to see better things. India is now a major exporter of grain to the Soviet Union and elsewhere, as well as the world's biggest manufacturer of railway stock (much for export to Africa) and a supplier of bicycles for the million (most British bicycle tyres are imported from India).

At this time of recession in Britain, Indian industrialists with factories here in Britain have full order books. What happened to their cultural disabilities? And what about Britain? Formerly the Workshop of the World, in the 1980s Britain has shed all its former burdens: it is no longer policing the oceans and keeping order over one-quarter of the land-surface. Alone among the Western European nations Britain is self-sufficient in energy. Yet Britain is floundering: the sick man of Europe, an honorary member of the Afro-Asian club. Why?

For an Englishman, about the only reassurance lies in contemplating Poland's economic ills. May would probably ascribe Poland's problems to the inflexible, unremitting nature of communism. Yet in the nineteenth century, German writers (with whom he often seems to agree) used to write of "the Polish system" as a synonym for chaos. Would we do better to study Polish responses to economics as an aspect of the "racial psyche"?

Perhaps this is enough to suggest that the dichotomy between a negative Third World and a positive West doesn't bear serious investigation. There are signs of positive development in Asia and Africa. There is plenty of evidence that both capitalism and communism in their Western forms are reaching the end of their present incarnation. Nothing is fixed and preordained.

MARK W. BOOTH:
The Experience of Song
226pp. Yale University Press.
£12.25
0 300 02622 6

It would seem that no people known to history, not even the most barbarous, has been without the satisfaction or solace of song: a form, perhaps, of self-expression and/or communication that predates speech, since it can exist without benefit of words. This being so, it is curious that the phenomenon of song has been so little investigated. Why do we sing? What kind of activity is it? Is it different in kind from anything that may be offered by words or music *per se*? In this book Mark Booth bravely approaches these questions head on. Though he produces no definitive answers to them, and in some cases such answers may not be possible, he none the less uncovers some of the deepest springs of human behaviour; and leads us to speculate as to why such enquiry has been so long delayed. Perhaps literary folk have been too doubtful of their proficiency to comment on musical matters, while musicians have, as so often, been wary of a presumed threat to what they unconsciously consider the autonomy of their art.

Mark Booth doesn't approach his theme from the standpoint of a musician but proves that for the most part he has no need to. He opens with a theoretical chapter which defines the fundamentals of song as oral communication, starting from the pioneer work on epic ballad by Milman Perry and Albert Lord. Folk and other types of primitive song offer a low density of information. Since that is not the main function of song, as soon as he sings man embarks on an activity that carries him beyond mere personal expression: when his words become music - even in the most rudimentary incantation and enchanted form of the reiteration of a single pitched tone, or the alternation of two pitches - he enters a different dimension. His purpose is no longer only, or even mainly, to convey a message; on the contrary, song tends to deny linear and temporal progression and to put the singer into communion with something other than himself, whether it be called God or the community or his immediate friends or his children. In primitive song, indeed, words are often replaced by musical or nonsensical vocables, as is evident from such disparate folk as weeping women in the Outer Hebrides or horse-breaking Amerindians on the Southern Plains. All forms of oral song use repetition, refrains, hollers and borrowings from previously established songs in order to enforce a togetherness that to some degree effaces self; all oral songs depend on living within given assumptions, while being at the same time outside them. Different *domes* are evolved for different kinds of song, from ritual incantation to folk ballad, from courtly song to art song, from country song to soul and gospel and glossy pop. All types operate by virtue of their conventionalism. When conventions have outworn their social or magical meaning we call them clichés, though they may still have a limited efficacy.

These considerations apply even to what appear to be, and in a sense are, "protest" songs, which seem to oppose rather than to ballast conformity. Bob Dylan, castigating the social conditions that have produced the plight of suicidal Hollis Brown, invites us to join with him in pointing an accusing finger at the off-stage villains of the piece: "The more vigorously such songs declare lonely alienation, the better they function. They are rituals of solidarity in an accepted state of mind." Intelligently enough, Booth rounds off his prelude section by reference to Zuckerkandl's book *Sound and Symbol*, which profoundly explores the nature of song as self-transcendence. "The singer who uses words wants more than just to be with the group; he

Making spiritual contact

By Wilfrid Mellers

conscious" attitude both as poet and as composer and the "instinctive" folk utterance here represented by Amariyllis is a fascinating subject, little explored but by no means invulnerable to analysis.

The remaining chapters return to "popular" as distinct from "art" songs, though their popularity is now inseparable from their status as commodities. The discussion of "The Doer" in the form of a "Strange Fish" demonstrates how a broadside halled is a point where orality and literacy meet. "Declined as it is by bought printed words to be processed by the left hemisphere and familiar tune to be recalled out of the right, it represents a long intermediate stage of mental accommodation." The main purpose of a broadside is to sell itself, as a commodity; a subsidiary purpose, which renders the main purpose more effective, is to flatter the listener's (and potential purchaser's) self-esteem - in this case in the form of a "marvel" of a brashly phallic import. To this end verbal niceties are unnecessary, even diatonic; all that is called for is a thumping rhythm and a tune that may be inappropriate but has the virtue of familiarity. At a slightly more sophisticated level the song is a theatre song like Polydora's "O ponder well", in *The Beggar's Opera*. This achieved a prodigious commercial success by adapting an old and well-loved tune to words of which the sentimental cynicism awoke echoes; as Booth puts it, "The song opera is a thumping rhythm and a tune that may be inappropriate but has the virtue of familiarity. At a slightly more sophisticated level the song is a theatre song like Polydora's 'O ponder well', in *The Beggar's Opera*. This achieved a prodigious commercial success by adapting an old and well-loved tune to words of which the sentimental cynicism awoke echoes; as Booth puts it, "The song opera is a thumping rhythm and a tune that may be inappropriate but has the virtue of familiarity. At a slightly more sophisticated level the song is a theatre song like Polydora's 'O ponder well', in *The Beggar's Opera*. 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Bureaucrats in battle

By H. S. Ferns

J. L. GRANATSTEIN:
A Man of Influence
Norman A. Robertson and Canadian
Statecraft 1929-68
488pp. Ottawa: Deneau. \$24.95.
0 8879 046 5

"Norman Robertson", J. L. Granatstein concludes, "was one of the men who made modern Canada. With a handful of other mandarins, he created for the Canadian public service the ethos of duty, high competence and intelligence that animated it in its heyday... he made the Department of External Affairs into the pre-eminent ministry of that service, and into one of the ablest foreign offices anywhere."

This is undoubtedly what the Department of External Affairs wanted to hear when they launched this study "at a Round Table discussion on Norman Robertson narrated by the Governor-General, the late Rt Hon Jules Léger, and held at Government House in February, 1978", and Professor Granatstein has delivered the goods. But how good are the goods?

Granatstein has followed the academically approved manufacturing procedures. He has read all the papers; no less than 145 collections in the possession of public institutions and private persons. He has interviewed 188 people who knew or had some connection with Robertson. There are 1,645 footnotes. Surely this must be the truth?

f, for one, am not so persuaded.

So long as Skelton managed the little shop and mediated between this civil service department and the political leadership in the country, the organization conformed to the ideal pattern of an ordered bureaucracy whose members were selected by merit measured in terms of education and examination performance. Then came the crisis in Europe in the summer of 1939. Prime Minister Mackenzie King, who was also the Secretary of State for External Affairs, quickly extinguished the neutrality of the department and took Canada into the war.

In spite of his isolationist bias, Skelton adjusted to the new situation, as one would expect a civil servant to do. Indeed, he killed himself with overwork, and a successor had to be found quickly in January 1941. Who would succeed to the Under-Secretaryship? The Prime Minister had to decide. There were several possibilities, although some of them were not on the spot in Ottawa but away in London, Washington, Vichy and elsewhere.

At this point bureaucratic competition supervened. How simple and straightforward is market competition compared with bureaucratic competition! Who gets what in such competition is determined by political and personal considerations. In this case, even an unsubstantiated rumour about Robertson's wife was whispered into the ear of the Prime Minister's friend Mrs Joan Patteson.

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It is not clear that he did so. Robertson was not a good administrator like H. L. Keneleyside. He did not have L. B. Pearson's flair for public relations. He could not be described as intellectually superior to Hume Wrong. He did not understand French-speaking Canada like Laurent Beaudry. On the other hand, he was on the spot in Ottawa. He had a firm grasp of the day-to-day work which had passed across and sometimes remained for ever on Skelton's desk. He had a quick intelligence, and above all the Prime Minister knew him and liked him as well as he ever liked any man.

Granatstein argues that Robertson never wanted power, only influence. This is a disputable judgment. Robertson never wanted public political power; the anonymous power and authority which exists in Whitehall. Unfortunately, some of his competitors in the Department of External Affairs outplayed him by transforming themselves into parliamentary politicians, notably Pearson, who became Canada's Prime Minister. Shortly after Pearson entered upon his high office he summoned all the deputy ministers - the equivalent of the British Permanent Under-Secretaries - to him, probably as a witness to his glory. Robertson did not turn up at this meeting, and he ended where he began, negotiating trade treaties and then lecturing in a university. Sad, really.

That said, Robertson can be esteemed and remembered for what he actually did as a public servant. He had from first to last a good understanding of economic problems, and particularly of international trade and banking. In this field he was a skilful, patient negotiator with a good creative imagination, and a fertile solver of seemingly insoluble problems with respect to tariffs, bounties and subsidies. He had the additional merit of being in principle a free-trader.

As a security adviser he had a good, sharp mind, and he knew what he was about in dealing with Soviet espionage. As a young man he had been a leftist and he sold the *Daily Worker* during the British General Strike in 1926; unlike, for example, the Clerk of the Canadian Privy Council, A. D. P. Heeney who only took his strike-breakers' certificate down from his office wall in 1940. In spite of his burden of work, Robertson kept abreast of the heart-searching of men like Koestler and Orwell, and this stood him in good stead when, in September 1945, Igor Gouzenko defected from the Soviet Embassy with a suitcase filled with Soviet Intelligence files. Mackenzie King wanted to avoid dealing with this matter and sought refuge in the

belief that Gouzenko was bad as mad, as the Soviet Government said he was. Robertson, however, believed Gouzenko when he declared he would rather commit suicide in Canada than be executed in the Soviet Union. With characteristic subtlety, Robertson involved Sir William Stevenson of British Intelligence whose advice finally persuaded Mackenzie King to take Gouzenko under the protection of the Canadian police, hear his story and look at his documents.

Of some of the larger questions of politics, Robertson had only a limited understanding. If he sometimes ventured to differ with Mackenzie King it was always in support of the insights of Churchill and Roosevelt. I clashed with him over Indian independence, and he frankly admitted to me that in this matter the Prime Minister did not follow the advice of his department. When he suggested I was a disaffected Red because I agreed with the Prime Minister and not him, I resigned from the service.

Another instance of his failure of understanding was his enthusiasm for banning nuclear weapons from Canadian territory during his second term as Under-Secretary from 1938 to 1963. Admittedly, American international policy was open to serious criticism in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but it is hard to see how Canada could remain an ally of the United States and at the same time contract out of the principal defence system of North America. Granatstein seeks an explanation in a possible reversion to the radicalism of Robertson's youth. This is unlikely. More likely is Robertson's inclination to serve the political authorities by proposing policies in line with their known dispositions. Prime Minister Diefenbaker was instinctively anti-American, and the Minister of External Affairs, Howard Green, was an enthusiast for peace and disarmament. Neither was very well acquainted with politics beyond the confines of the Canadian House of Commons and the constituencies back home. To have an expert devise some policies which seemed to have electoral popularity was agreeable to them. Furthermore, my guess is that Robertson wanted to keep Pearson from becoming Prime Minister.

Granatstein says "there can be no doubt that Norman Robertson was delighted by the election results" (which brought Pearson to power). I doubt this, and everything which followed reinforces this view. Pearson's electoral victory ended Robertson's career. In bureaucratic wars there are winners and losers. Retirement pensions and superannuation jobs cannot conceal this.

There is, however, almost nothing else that Durrell cannot be accused of. But the objections, at least when raised by a voice from England, are likely to be the kind which betray as much about the carper's post-Movement, anti-Romantic prejudices as they tell us about Durrell. For Durrell, as Edward Lucie-Smith once pointed out, has committed all the sins. He is a dante of "abroad" who has never shown much interest in his respect for the home-grown scene; he has spent most of his writing life detailing his passion for the exotic, whether in landscape, literature or sex; he has closely identified himself with a string of places, people and myths, where the proper English attitude is one of sceptical distance; he is a curiously and enviably Mediterranean figure as he sits, heartland as "rebel occupied". No-one, dispensing his faintly hedonistic brand of wisdom and warmth in some television interview or travelogue; and he suggests the figure of the Byronic; sexually and geographically free-ranging poet, bound by no ties or codes but those of his own making. Last, but not unforgivably, as well as being a poet Durrell has had a successful career as a novelist and travel-writer, one which has left him free from the necessity of earning his living by any means other than his pen.

The situation is not without its ironies, of which Durrell is the first

to show himself sharply aware. The "Ode" is one witness to that, and another is his correspondence with Richard Aldington. For the letters suggest a good deal of what self-imposed exile has meant to both men. Beginning (apart from Aldington's polite 1933 reply to a lost fan letter sent by a youthful Durrell) in 1937, these letters span the years until Aldington's death in 1962.

Aldington had had a "distinguished career", sketched by the editors in their introduction. Preferring the wines and cuisine of France as well as its "freer intellectual climate" might, in 1928, have seemed good reason to go there to live permanently, and the French connection was for Aldington a strong and compelling one. In a letter of thirty-odd years

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There are more attractive touches certainly, flashes of humour, tenderness and pathos which show us to share the qualities of the man Durrell loved. Despite all the bluff and bluster, Aldington had a gift for friendship, and also for complete devotion: the letters when they speak of his daughter (and companion of his later years) Catherine, and of his ex-wife H. D. in her last illness, convince us of that. Also this wry aside on a passage in *Clelia*:

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Yet, when Aldington drops his guard there was also a genuine love for Lawrence: "Just getting to the end of the book on D. H. L., and killing Lorenzo over again, quoted 'Bavarian Gentians' which is so beautiful and still so moving, I can't go on..."

There is nothing so close to the heart of the matter from Durrell. He emerges as an immensely gregarious man of large appetites and energies, one who was talkative about "being a writer" (as he is about being a lover, father and a newcomer to the *Midi*) but who never, somehow, wholly convinces us that the writing matters all that much. All part of the game, of course, to pretend that it doesn't, but there is little sense of anything beyond the paraphernalia of publishers' deadlines and translation deals, advances and sales figures, royalties and reviews. On the family side, it is true, there is an impression of enormous warmth. But this is translated, on the literary side, into a persona of Boy's Own enthusiasm, only one which goes to fiction rather than, say, flying biplanes or trekking to the Poles.

Richness of detail on plumbing and heating arrangements (not to be entered into lightly in the case of that area bounded by Montpellier to the west, Sommières and Nîmes to the north, and Alzein-Provence to the east), on the Durrell daughters' holidays, the weather, and the state of the *garçonne* is not really balanced by this kind of thing on the remark-

Anti-home thoughts from abroad

By Alan Jenkins

IAN S. MACNIVEN and HARRY T. MOORE (Editors)
Literary Lifelines
The Richard Aldington-Lawrence Durrell Correspondence
236pp. Faber. £8.95.
0 571 11501 2

LAWRENCE DURRELL:
A Smile in the Mind's Eye
64 pp. Wildwood House. £3.95.
0 7045 30 45 7

Collected Poems 1931-1974
Edited by James A. Brigham
380pp. Faber. 29.
0 571 18009 4

Philip Larkin's "No" to foreign poetry and Kingsley Amis's dismissal of "abroad" are, happily, no longer given as much currency as they used to be; but no amount of talk about narrow-mindedness, complacency or parochialism accounts for the feeling of wounded betrayal, the petulant disdains still provoked in some quarters by mention of "expatriate" writers - such as Lawrence Durrell and Richard Aldington - who for different reasons and in different generations obey an obscure impulse or make a conscious decision to leave this country, more or less for good.

By the time Aldington left, in 1928, he had already developed a strong attachment to French literature, and had acquired a reputation as a skilled interpreter of that literature to the English; but by the 1950s Durrell had to press to review, for the *New Statesman*, Aldington's critical introduction to the Provencal poet and Nobel prize-winner Frédéric Mistral. Nor has Durrell himself been let off lightly. Over twenty years ago a *TLS* reviewer wrote that "Mr Durrell and Miss Compton-Burnett meet with such praise in France as to raise many a lukewarm English eyebrow..."

Ivy Compton-Burnett's response is unrecorded; but Durrell took the opportunity, in his "Ode to a Luke-warm Eyebrow", to hit back with good-humoured acerbity at the reviewer who "Dost in prose bald and breathless exhale an ineffable / Condescension" and at "the cold steamed cod of thy monochrome prodigy", ending with a salvo of warnings to "fog-bound Thames-bedevilled fabulists" that the rewards of laziness will be a colorless merelessness, a dark / Sterility, the pedant's parasitic portion. No one, certainly, could accuse Durrell of either laziness or monochrome proing.

There is, however, almost nothing else that Durrell cannot be accused of. But the objections, at least when raised by a voice from England, are likely to be the kind which betray as much about the carper's post-Movement, anti-Romantic prejudices as they tell us about Durrell. For Durrell, as Edward Lucie-Smith once pointed out, has committed all the sins. He is a dante of "abroad" who has never shown much interest in his respect for the home-grown scene; he has spent most of his writing life detailing his passion for the exotic, whether in landscape, literature or sex; he has closely identified himself with a string of places, people and myths, where the proper English attitude is one of sceptical distance; he is a curiously and enviably Mediterranean figure as he sits, heartland as "rebel occupied". No-one, dispensing his faintly hedonistic brand of wisdom and warmth in some television interview or travelogue; and he suggests the figure of the Byronic; sexually and geographically free-ranging poet, bound by no ties or codes but those of his own making. Last, but not unforgivably, as well as being a poet Durrell has had a successful career as a novelist and travel-writer, one which has left him free from the necessity of earning his living by any means other than his pen.

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with an exotically-named lunatic who claimed he was the rightful King of Poland, and whom Aldington befriended. Durrell has one nice moment of understatement, which still doesn't do him much credit: "I'm afraid my anti-jewishness doesn't extend as far as Belsen, and never will. What is one to say to someone who publicly approves? Silence were better..."

Could Durrell have been unaware of the irony, none too comic, of Aldington's pronouncement on "that pack of pansy-cowards who now rule the roost in 'poetry'" - by whom he means, most likely, Auden, Spender and MacNeice: this written in September 1958? And this from a man who had published, in his immature days, the following drearily

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Jill Kremenitz's photograph (1974) of Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller as burning bedfellows in *Pacific Palisades*, California, is taken from her delightful and revealing collection of "literary portraits". The Writer's *Palisades* (Unnumbered pages. David Godine, 45 Blackfriars Rd, London SE1. £17.50, 0 8923 349 4). Kremenitz, who regards her work as "a journalistic endeavour", often lets her subjects "choose the locations and circumstances they feel best project their character". She has photographed John Updike skipping, Paul Theroux standing by a train, Gore Vidal talking to Barbara Walters while four television monitors show *Yahel*, alone, talking, P. G. Wodehouse holding a dachshund, Pablo Neruda a large shell, and Kurt Vonnegut feeding his baby grandson while reading a newspaper.

later, however, he is full of impatience and self-pity, biding for Italy, and the letters as a whole show Aldington's growing sense of dereliction; he had "slipped from eminence", and was in no position to climb back up, when Durrell arrived on the scene.

The letters reveal the development of a curious but obviously deep and affectionate friendship, based initially on the younger man's enthusiasm for Aldington's writings, then the accident that brought Durrell to live within a few miles of Aldington in southern France, then a steadily growing sense of being allied by deeper links, not just mutual admiration, sympathy or outlook, or the feeling of being "brothers" in "the magic", the "damnable trade" of writing (as Durrell calls it in two antithetical phrases which are far from untypical), but comrades in an expatriate struggle against British obscurity, ignorance and malice - the forces ranged against them by reviewers, publishers and the public alike in the "isle dolorosa" (Aldington, posturing too). In fact the spleen against little Englandism is vented mainly by Aldington, and it is hard not to feel, as the diatribes intensify and Aldington vituperates with increasing violence, and as the eulogies and laudatory grow more clamorous for Roy Campbell, that the enemies exist for the most part in Aldington's head. As the distressed imagination of the author of *Death of a Hero* and *A Dream in the Lucembourgs* rages magnificently over the glories of the past and the debris of the present, the overall impression is not that of a one-central figure on the landscape unjustly pushed out to the periphery, still less of a major talent thrust from its pinnacle by the whim of fashion and public taste, but

on his *Alexandria Quartet*, which was to make him an international celebrity, a critical success, and, for the first time since his *Corfu* years, an author of independent means. How important this was to him comes over loud and clear; as do the high value he put on his developing intimacy with Aldington, his willingness to step in, to encourage and cajole at the merest suggestion of any project that would get Aldington back to serious work. But for all that the letters are still disturbingly one-sided: it is as if Durrell sensed the possibility of causing anguish to the grounded Aldington as they watched his own career take off.

Aldington everywhere effuses what is surely a genuine admiration for, and confidence in, the *Alexandria Quartet* as he reads it book by book; but again, almost as if disturbed by a suspicion that Durrell's is a success which has more to do with "the literary world" than with literature (Durrell jokingly but unceasingly keeps referring to "my middlebrow success"), he over-compensates by constant assurances of his own estimation of Durrell's "genius" and his utter conviction of the younger writer's major stature: "You are the only one who matters". More worrying still (and one wonders how embarrassed by them Durrell was) are the wider and more vociferous of Aldington's right-left posturings. On his admiration for Oswald Mosley, for example: "His old-time aping of the Führer was a ghastly blunder, but he was never dangerous. Or, a few sentences later: 'A cholera epidemic confined to communists and New Statesman socialists would be a Very Good Thing'. And elsewhere: 'Let England stew in its own Jews'. Antisemitism recurs not only in connection with Mosley but

exquisite and unbelievably feeble stuff. She has new leaves. After her dead flowers, like the little almond tree which the frost hurt."

The suggestions of paranoia and persecution-complex come up again in Aldington's obsession with the two other Lawrences, D. H. and T. E. The ranks of the British "Establishment" had apparently closed against him after publication of his *Lawrence of Arabia*, which exposed the "hero", the "Establishment's favourite little sod", as "a bogus prince of Mecca" and "a bugger".

The controversy does not, perhaps, deserve resurrecting, but although there was undoubtedly an element of truth in this particular conspiracy theory, Aldington is seen and heard at his most fantastically self-pitying in pursuing it. Another late note is the failure of the English (this error compounded by the Lady Chatterley trial) to recognize and adequately salute the achievement of D. H. Lawrence. There is a choice passage in which the obsessions are dovetailed together, and each fuels the intensity of the other:

What is the origin of this intense and prolonged persecution of D. H. L. when other writers get by unscathed? First, of course, being only a bloody working man he had the incomparable impudence to possess genius instead of having offended Eton and Magdalene. Then he ran away with a prof's wife, instead of buggering camel boys in the sands of Arabia. Felix

There may be an insight here, but it leaves a nasty aftertaste.

The unsorrowing survivors

By Tim Mason

HANS SPEIER:
From The Ashes of Disgrace
336pp. University of Massachusetts Press. \$20.
0 87023 135 9

This is a very strange book. Its author-editor, Hans Speier, is a distinguished sociologist of conservative persuasion, who studied under Karl Mannheim at Heidelberg in the 1920s. He and his Jewish wife fled to the United States in 1933, where he helped to set up the "exile university", the New School for Social Research in New York. Unlike many of his refugee colleagues, Speier, it seems, adapted swiftly to American forms of pragmatic liberalism, and he soon distanced himself from the main critical and theoretical concerns of German sociology. After Hitler's declaration of war on the United States he was recruited into government service (alongside German exiles of all political persuasions), and he worked at various "Information" and "Communication" desks until 1942, when he left the State Department and returned to the lecture theatre. However, he did not then sever his connections with the American government. His interest, as an academic, in military affairs, especially in German rearmament, made him a valued consultant to the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, and he made many visits to Germany in this dual capacity during the Cold War years.

Neither the exact nature of Speier's duties in the State Department nor the precise purpose of his later travels to Germany are made clear in the present volume. It contains only the most tantalizing and indirect information on the subject which could have been: a central theme - the role of German-American scholars and administrators to the creation of the West German State. Speier is alternately secretive and quite unselfconscious about his own work and its significance to American and German politics. Sometimes he warns, with no explanation, that sensitive sections are omitted from the miscellany of reports, letters and journal entries

which make up the book; sometimes the causes he was serving seemed to him to be so self-evident, so obviously right, that they did not, and still do not, need to be described, let alone analysed. These causes were all typical components of liberal American anti-communism: reconciling German rearmament with the stability of the new system of representative government; realising the Soviet Union on all fronts; and, in the interests of both of these causes, combating the influence of the dinosaur Right in West German politics. He tells us nothing about how this was done; the interplay between American agencies and West German institutions, formal and informal, remains obscure, as does the organization and funding of conference and political education campaigns.

There is no indication in the book that these omissions were requested by the United States government. Speier's blend of innocence and editorial suppression is doubly tantalizing because he frequently notes the informal and confidential character of many (perhaps important) policy discussions in the early 1950s. At many points his journals suggest that ill-defined American agencies were able to trade upon Adenauer's penchant for secrecy and the deference of German public figures to Americans in order to exercise a great deal of influence upon West German politics. Speier himself may or may not have played a role in these procedures; he lifts no veils. His description of himself as "reticent" is a signal understatement, and in consequence the value of many of the records as sources in this particular respect is either uncertain or slight.

What he does offer is a mixed bag of contemporary observations, personal and political, on the changing face of West Germany in the first post-war decade, with a linking commentary and explanatory notes. Some of these observations are banal - bomb damage, travel arrangements and menus, political platitudes. Others are eloquent and surprising. The latter do not add up to a coherent picture which would justify the title of the volume, but no biography interested in German intellectual history should miss Speier's record of his first post-war meeting with Karl

Jaspers, or his many remarks on the revival of music in West Germany after 1945. His antipathy to Max Horkheimer and to the ambitions of the re-founded Frankfurt School, and his attentive critical reserve in encounters with Social Democrats (Otto Suhr, Fritz Erler and the young Willy Brandt) vividly recall the aroma of cordite hanging over the ideological conflicts of the early 1950s. His many discussions with military experts and with high-ranking officers in the Bundeswehr shed a good deal of valuable incidental light upon the military resistance to Hitler and upon the ways in which it was misrepresented and misunderstood in the decade after July 20, 1944. These latter interviews provided the raw material for Speier's books on the foreign and military policies of the Federal Republic, but the recollections and judgments of those with whom he discussed the role of the Army in the Third Reich take up much space and are of considerable historical interest - this despite the fact that Speier rarely pressed any of the officers really hard about their politics (General Gehlen, for example, got off rather lightly when Speier achieved the rare distinction of persuading him to talk for the record.)

All in all, National Socialism casts a dark but indistinct shadow over this volume. Speier repeatedly regrets the diffidence, evasiveness and hucknosed defensive reactions of those who had survived and were building the new Republic. Yet he never explores or reflects upon this moral and political numbness concerning the barbarism of the immediate past, which Alexander Mitscherlich called "the incapacity to sorrow". It is an odd omission on the part of an anti-Nazi exile and professional political sociologist, who had been a critical participant in the late 1940s. How and why a full reckoning with this past was so long delayed in West German public (and private) life still remains to be analysed. Speier's reflections would have been more interesting than the unadorned documentation which he offers, more interesting too than his own and others' thoughts about the nature of *Angst* in West German society, or the startling qualities of the young Franz Josef Strauss.

There is, however, almost nothing else that Durrell cannot be accused of. But the objections, at least when raised by a voice from England, are likely to be the kind which betray as much about the carper's post-Movement, anti-Romantic prejudices as they tell us about Durrell. For Durrell, as Edward Lucie-Smith once pointed out, has committed all the sins. He is a dante of "abroad" who has never shown much interest in his respect for the home-grown scene; he has spent most of his writing life detailing his passion for the exotic, whether in landscape, literature or sex; he has closely identified himself with a string of places, people and myths, where the proper English attitude is one of sceptical distance; he is a curiously and enviably Mediterranean figure as he sits, heartland as "rebel occupied". No-one, dispensing his faintly hedonistic brand of wisdom and warmth in some television interview or travelogue; and he suggests the figure of the Byronic; sexually and geographically free-ranging poet, bound by no ties or codes but those of his own making. Last, but not unforgivably, as well as being a poet Durrell has had a successful career as a novelist and travel-writer, one which has left him free from the necessity of earning his living by any means other than his pen.

The situation is not without its ironies, of which Durrell is the first

to show himself sharply aware. The "Ode" is one witness to that, and another is his correspondence with Richard Aldington. For the letters suggest a good deal of what self-imposed exile has meant to both men. Beginning (apart from Aldington's polite 1933 reply to a lost fan letter sent by a youthful Durrell) in 1937, these letters span the years until Aldington's death in 1962.

Aldington had had a "distinguished career", sketched by the editors in their introduction. Preferring the wines and cuisine of France as well as its "freer intellectual climate" might, in 1928, have seemed good reason to go there to live permanently, and the French connection was for Aldington a strong and compelling one. In a letter of thirty-odd years

of the irony, none too comic, of Aldington's pronouncement on "that pack of pansy-cowards who now rule the roost in 'poetry'" - by whom he means, most likely, Auden, Spender and MacNeice: this written in September 1958? And this from a man who had published, in his immature days, the following drearily

with an exotically-named lunatic who claimed he was the rightful King of Poland, and whom Aldington befriended. Durrell has one nice moment of understatement, which still doesn't do him much credit: "I'm afraid my anti-jewishness doesn't extend as far as Belsen, and never will. What is one to say to someone who publicly approves? Silence were better..."

Sandhurst style

By Lucy Mair

OLUSEGUN OBASANJO:
My Command
An Account of the Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970
192pp. Heinemann Educational. £8.50.
0 435 96333 6

"It was getting dark. I met Lt Col David Ogunewe who had been my senior officer in the 5 Battalion at Kaduna, before independence..."

We hugged and embraced, both of us almost shedding tears of joy. Nigeria's civil

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support their parents, they write letters from night to left.

His description does not represent an eyewitness account, but serves primarily as an illustration of the foreignness of Egypt. For the Lycians also the other evidence was no more significant for them than for other peoples. In Homer (ie, the earliest reference we have to Lycians) the Lycian Glaucus explains who he is by tracing the male lines of his ancestry. His cousin Sarpedon was chief of the Lycians at Troy, rather than Glaucus himself, not because Sarpedon was the son of the hero Bellerophon's daughter, while Glaucus was son of his son, but because Sarpedon was the son of the king of the gods, Zeus. Inscriptions from Lycia have recently been found, but they too reveal no trace whatever of a matrilineal system of descent.

Aristotle states explicitly that the "Lycian custom" that Lady Psyche prizes would have been interpreted by Greeks as a sign of decadence; to Aristotle, the rule of women (or *gynaikekratia*) was a sign of how democracies tended to turn into tyrannies; women get out of hand, wives are permitted to inform against their husbands. The Lycians, according to a summary of Aristotle's account of their government, "are all tyrants. They have no written laws, only customs, and have long since been under the rule of women. They sell false witness together with their property". The third-century BC poet Apollonius of Rhodes says explicitly that the Amazons "do not respect the laws of the gods". According to Aristotle's pupil Clearchus (who lived about the same time as Apollonius) a final reason why the Lydians (not Lycians) could be considered decadent was that they had been ruled by a woman, Omphale; she had been raped by Lydian men, and in revenge forced respectable women to have intercourse with slaves; this same Omphale was said to have purchased as a slave the greatest Greek hero, Hercules, and to have made him her lover.

Mythologies of patriarchy in other cultures serve a similar function. Joan Bamberger, formerly of the Wellesley College anthropology department, has shown that myths about the rule of women from two culturally distinct areas, Tierra del Fuego at the extreme south-west tip of South America and the tropical forests of north-west Amazon and central Brazil, are also intended as negative examples. In both cultures women are said to have been the first to rule over the land and have owned all the emblems of power; but they ruled without mercy and justice. (Remember that Apollonius of Rhodes, writing in Alexandria in the third century BC, described the Amazons on the shore of the Black Sea as "not gentle and not respecting of established laws"). Then suddenly in both South American myths the situation is reversed; the women are driven out, excluded from the secrets of power, and kept for ever over subordinate. This change-over is also celebrated in ritual. The myths "constantly reiterate that woman did not know how to handle power when they had it". They do not represent actual history but instead explain the way things are. "The Rule of Women", Bamberger concludes, "instead of heralding a promising future, harks back to a past darkened with repeated failures. If, in fact, women are over-going to rule, they must rid themselves of the myth that states they have been proved unworthy of leadership roles".

A first step in the process of cultural liberation for women will be to understand that the Greek myth of the Amazons serves the same purpose as the South American, and not to continue playing with the notion that part of it, that is, the part that we or Lady Psyche might like, is historical. Of course it is much easier to accept that South American myth is unhistorical. Greek authors present their material in such reasonable form that it takes some time to realize how greatly their research methodology (if you can call it that) differs from ours. In the sixth century Greeks travelled to Thule, the north shore of the Black Sea, the land that, in seventh-century, epis-

poetry had been inhabited by Amazons; when they found no Amazons there, they did not give up their belief in the Amazons' existence, but rather thought of the Amazons as being located in a part of the world that had not been explored, namely the uncivilized land of Scythia (ie, what we now call southern Russia); other accounts put them in Ethiopia or places they had heard of but where no one had actually been.

Since we are accustomed to think of Herodotus as the founder of modern history, it may at first be difficult to appreciate how different the Greek view of reality is from ours; to us, a thing either exists, empirically, or it is imaginary; if archaeologists turned up evidence of women's armour near Thermopylae we would believe in the existence of Amazons but not otherwise. The Greeks instead thought in terms of probability (what they called *eikos*, what is fitting or likely), and did not distinguish between the remote and recent past, or accord more credibility to what could be demonstrated than to what could be vividly described (even at third hand). In relating an account of a past event, an author was free to remove or add details to make his story more probable. This attitude has contributed greatly to modern confusion about the relationship of ancient myth and history.

Orators in Athens, for example in the fourth century BC, treated the story of the Amazons' invasion of Attica in the same way as the Persian invasion of 480. The Athenians' victory over the Amazons came to be regarded as their first major civic achievement. The orator Lykias, in a speech for the war dead in 359, depicts the Amazons in many respects as formidable enemies: they wore the first to wear iron armour and to ride on horseback; they had conquered all their neighbours; but when they appeared in all the natural timidity of their sex, and showed themselves less women in their external appearance than in their weakness and cowardice. All were killed on the spot. (Funeral oration, 4-6.) Other writers, less concerned with praising the state in general, described the battle in ways that explained the position of various monuments, such as the Amazonium, various tombs and a column outside the city gate near Phaleron commemorating the Amazon Antiope or Hippolyta (ie, Theseus' consort), who according to some authorities was killed there, and according to others lived to establish the Amazonium at Troezen. Exact strategic and topographical details of the battle were provided by Cleidemus, author of an early history of Attica; he might wonder from what sources (other than his own imagination) he derived them, but Plutarch, in his *Life of Theseus*, illustrates how an ancient author approaches his source material: he gives the most space to Cleidemus, because of the detail his account preserves; Plutarch adds other information when it corresponds to existing monuments in Athens and elsewhere; he copes with contradictions (such as difference as to where and when Antiope died) by giving both versions, and observes "It is hardly surprising that history should go astray when it has to deal with events so remote as these".

Bachofen's approach to the evidence is no less eclectic than Plutarch's. His premises were, of course, more elaborate. He assumed that myth represented if not a precise record of specific institutions at least a general impression of cultural practice, enduring characteristics and human psychology. Scholars in his day had become increasingly interested in discovering the common grounds among civilizations of different times and places. Artists (Wagner is the obvious example) sought to recapture in their own language and customs impressions of their vanished heritage. There was in particular increased awareness of women's role in society; Tennyson's *The Princess* was published in the same year as *Mother Right*. Bachofen spoke of discovering in myth fixed and recognizable laws, among them the notion that in primitive societies woman could be seen to exert over man a powerful religious and moral influence, so that even though she was physically weaker, she was able to ensure the

continuity of her sense of social values. One suspects that his notion of ancient realities was based on a contemporary appreciation of the role of woman in his own society, and that the fixed laws he saw in the confused and contradictory record of the past were the patterns he most wanted to find. His work had wide influence: Nietzsche was familiar with it, and Engels adopted the idea of early patriarchy because it gave support to his notion that the earliest (ie, natural) form of human existence had been communal.

Bachofen's theories would be of purely antiquarian interest were it not that they continue to be taken seriously by certain leading feminists. I have already mentioned Phyllis Chesler, whose reliance on a single secondary source would not have earned her a high grade in any Wesleyan history course. Kate Millet's discussion of patriarchy is far more sophisticated; she quotes directly from Bachofen's text (without the confused elaborations of Diner); she sees his work in its cultural context. But although she capably summarizes the main lines of Bachofen's arguments, she does not have the technical training she needs properly to evaluate his use of ancient evidence. It would be tempting to say that she wants so much to believe in patriarchy that she does not care to look too closely; certainly it is interesting that she is most willing to accept what Bachofen has to say about Greek evidence - one suspects once again the instinctive need of the revolutionary for a Greek precedent.

Millet in her discussion of patriarchy moves almost imperceptibly from critique to recapitulation of Bachofen's claim that the discovery of patriarchy was a key factor in the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy, and uses as evidence Bachofen's own example, Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. Millet describes the drama as a conflict between patriarchal and patriarchal forces, in which patriarchal forces win the day by the specious argument that the real parent of the child is the father, while the mother is merely a vehicle for carrying the seed from which the child grows. The patriarchal forces, represented by the hideous Furies, capitulate without much of a struggle. In her summary Millet cites from Aeschylus' text the passages Bachofen chose to emphasize in his discussion. These quotations, in the English version of *Mother Right*, are given in Richmond Lattimore's translation, which keeps close to the original text. But Millet prefers to quote from a "translation" of the *Oresteia* that she says strikes her as being "closer in spirit to the original". Which original? The translation she cites is not a translation at all but a stage adaptation of Lattimore's version. In Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, the Furies are disown your mother's dear blood?"; ie, the blood from and in which he was born; Lewin's adaptation, which Millet supposes is closer in spirit to the Greek, reads "Do you deny that you were born of woman?" and shifts the emphasis of the original from blood-relationship to gender. Lewin's adaptation might seem more authentic to someone who does not know Greek because it stresses issues of gender, but it also stresses issues of gender, male versus female, rational procedures vs witch-hunts, rational vs irrational. If Millet had been able to understand what Aeschylus actually wrote, I doubt if she would have found it so encouraging.

In the original, the Furies do not give in nearly so easily as Millet (or Bachofen) supposes, nor does their argument about patriarchy carry the day. As Aeschylus portrays it, the Alabian jury is split evenly; it is Athena who casts the deciding vote. That she votes in favour of the father, being the more important parent, would come as no surprise to the Athenian audience; Athena herself is subordinate to her father, Zeus, and in Athens, as in most places, the father's status determined the status of the child. But another deciding factor, which Millet fails to quote, is that Clytemnestra is not just an ordinary woman, but "one who slew her husband, the man who slew her husband, the man of the house". The importance to play give, great as mother-because they are representing her against her murderer, had we seen them on stage when they were pur-

suing Clytemnestra or Aegisthus for the murder of Agamemnon, they would have emphasized other aspects of the importance of blood-relationships. Athena persuades them to play a more positive role in the administration of justice by promising them great honour, i.e., which also means material recompense in the form of sacrifice and powers, the sort of thing the Christian god might not care about but no Greek god would ever disdain. Far from being suppressed, as Bachofen supposed, the Furies' great strength is recognized, since it is only with their support that Athens will maintain her judicial system and her political and economic importance.

In drawing on the *Eumenides* as evidence, Millet and Bachofen both forgot that they were dealing not with a historical document of transcripts of an interview but with a drama, and if Apollo or Athena gives special prominence to patriarchy, they are speaking as characters in a play and not as representatives of Athenian society as a whole. Certainly no Athenian would assume that any lawyer, even when he claimed to be stating the "law", was doing anything more than explaining how he understood the "law" or *nomos* - which was continually subject to reinterpretation or change. Millet states that she is exercising a criticism "which takes into account the larger cultural context in which literature is conceived and produced". But I find it profoundly depressing that an accomplished scholar of contemporary literature should feel herself competent to interpret and expound an ancient text whose language she does not know and whose culture she has studied only partially and at second hand. She should have remembered Oliver Chancellor's advice in James's *The Bostonians* - still one of the most profound commentaries on women's struggle for independence. "The change in the dreadful position of women was not a question for today simply, or for tomorrow, but for many years to come; and there would be a great deal to think of, to nip out. One thing they were determined upon - that men shouldn't taunt them with being superficial."

In the end, it seems safe to say only that cultural theories tell us more about the theorist than about the culture they describe. An example is the importance Bachofen and Engels gave to the discovery of patriarchy; they presumed that mothers in early society had primary importance, because maternity was certain where patriarchy was not, and it was only after the father's role in sexual intercourse was completely understood that men assumed control of society. Malinowski's work seems to confirm that certain "aboriginal" or primitive tribes did not know where babies came from; but it has been shown since that the real ignorance was displayed not by the natives but by the anthropologists who failed to understand the purpose of their myths - think of what one could conclude about our understanding of intercourse from a literal interpretation of the story of the Annunciation! If Kate Millet's "pioneering" work is representative, as it is often taken to be, of the new cross-cultural methodology of women's studies, we might now ask what her theories say about us. Her interpretation of the *Oresteia* tells us not so much about Aeschylus or fifth-century attitudes as what she feels to be the central issue of our time, the domination of women by men and women's unquestioning acceptance of the roles imposed upon them.

Concentration on our problems can lead to ingenuous distortions, even by feminists who know Greek. From Zeitlin, Professor of Classics at Princeton, argues that in the *Oresteia* purification with pig's blood (by symbolic association with the female genitalia) represents a rebirth that breaks the original bond between the child Orestes and his mother Clytemnestra. By concentrating on male-female conflict within the drama, she has lost sight of the function of purification ritual outside the drama: pig's blood was used at Delphi to cleanse and murder of blood-guilt. Since the victim was usually not the murderer's mother, what did pig's blood symbolize then?

Let me provide just one more illustration of the dangers inherent in a "multi-disciplinary" and "cross-cultural" approach. In her book *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, Carolyn Heilbrun, Professor of English at Columbia, seeks to show that women in Western literature have played a more active role and more successfully than has often been supposed. In the case of nineteenth and twentieth-century fiction it is possible to describe critical reaction and authorial intention, but when Heilbrun deals with classical texts, at the very beginning of her book, she is compelled to guess what Sophocles or Aeschylus had in mind by comparing the action in their dramas to ordinary patterns of behaviour as expressed in "myth". By "patterns" she means more or less the way things are done in patriarchal society as described by Bachofen and further developed in the psychology of Freud. Oedipus in Sophocles' play is better able to understand feminine existence after he has blinded, ie, he is dependent on others, like a woman; dramas such as Sophocles' *Antigone* also may be seen as attempts to show that one can survive best by incorporating both masculine and feminine principles of existence, like the prophet Teiresias, who in Hellenistic tradition was said to have been a woman for part of his life. Such psychological interpretations as these have immediate appeal and can be reached without special expertise; Heilbrun notes with approval that the interesting suggestion that Oedipus attempted to rediscover the feminine in himself by killing his father and marrying his mother had been proposed by a student in a seminar on Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*.

Heilbrun's ideas make better sense when one keeps a safe distance from the text (in English, let alone in Greek). Neither in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* nor in the *Antigone* does Sophocles mention the story of bow Teiresias had been a woman, though perhaps he knew it. He would not have regarded Antigone's action as "masculine", because in the ancient world it was a woman's established duty to bury the dead, and the blood-relationship of siblings was considered closer than any other. When confronted with a violation of divine law, even those outside the lower structure of society respond by being disobedient; the distinguished legal scholar David Daube compares Antigone's case with that of the midwives' disobedience in Exodus 1:15ff, when Pharaoh orders them to kill all male babies immediately upon delivery. When Creon is angry because Antigone's disobedience has made it appear that he has been ruled by a woman, he reveals how little he understands of the real issue before him; but it is the question whether god or man can make laws, and not the conflict of man against female, that is the central issue of the play.

It seems then that this only "culture" that Heilbrun and Millet have examined in detail is our own culture, and in discussing antiquity they have merely applied the concerns of our time to the past. Perhaps it is fair to say that they have not made much of an advance on the history lesson offered to students at Princess Ida's college by Lady Psyche. She (you remember) presented "A bird's-eye-view of all the marvellous past", ie, offered a survey in which she describes events in summary and out of context: the legendary Amazons, Lycian matrilineal customs - both from Asia Minor; Tanquid and Cleolla from Rome; then the women's status in Greek outline, in the Persian, Greek, Roman empires, "how far from just"; then angrily, women in China, Japan, the age of elphinstone, to the present when "commenced with a prophecy of the future, and full equality for women. That Tennyson was able so accurately to project what would happen is more frightening than surprising; classical oratory provides ready models of how to stir up emotions. Tennyson makes it clear that emotion is involved in every aspect of academic discourse at Princess Ida's college, and that the faculty are more like clergy than professors in their desire to convert and to retain a group of the faithful. Using the present to reconstruct a false past is just one of the problems

inherent in the assumption that women's history is a special discipline. In the process of recovering events and of endowing them with a significance that in fact they never had, Lady Psyche and her followers seem to have assumed that because they are women they are competent to assess the fate of other women in all of history and all over the world. I hope that my discussion of the Amazons and matrilineal has shown that being a woman does not give Millet a significant advance over Bachofen: the one skill that might have helped her she had no time to acquire, that is, knowledge of Greek. Heilbrun in her remarks on the *Antigone* points up another problem. The claim has frequently been made that women's studies are run more democratically than men's; it has seemed appropriate in order to compensate for past deprivations to allow full discussion and expression to all participants. The process is well illustrated in another work by Heilbrun, *The Theban Mysteries*, which she wrote under the name of Amanda Cross. There she describes a seminar conducted by her heroine Kate Fawcett, Professor of English at Columbia, at a famous girls' school in the most fashionable area of New York (it is in fact her Alma Mater and mine, the Brearley); the class is discussing the *Antigone*; everyone has a say, allusions to English writers abound; "No harm", says Fawcett, "in comparing the *Antigone* to anything you want, if you think the comparison isn't superficial." But is the student in a position to know how superficial she is being, and how could a comparison help but be superficial when no one thinks it necessary to refer to the text, even in English?

Apparently no one asks (or answers) these questions because everyone at the school (except the Latin department, who have not been consulted) appears to be delighted with the seminar: the students are involved; they do twice as much work as usual; they have even begun improvising the *Antigone* in their drama class. As so often in America, academic success appears to be measured primarily by popularity.

The continuing appeal of Bachofen's theory derives from its putting the blame for women's loss of power on to male conspiracy, envy and ignorance; accordingly, by implication, more recognition of that wrong, a regaining of full rights, seems all that women need to be restored to their original and rightful position in the world. Lady Psyche in her speech seems to say that all one requires is to shift the emphasis in history, and women's true role will

In the feminine gender

By Hermione Lee

MARGARET CROSLAND:
Beyond the Lighthouse
English Women Novelists in the Twentieth Century.
260pp; Constable, £7.50.
0 09 462410 0

If Mrs Nickleby had had occasion to write a hook, it might have come out something like this erratic, scatterbrained survey. Margaret Crosland makes a passionate (and welcome) case for two undervalued writers: Dorothy Richardson and Christina Stoddard, and deals affectionately with some little-known regional and historical novelists (you've heard of Naomi Mitchison, but did you know about D. K. Broster?) But the selection has a babbled air. Stevie Smith is missing; only three of Katherine Mansfield's stories are referred to; Ivy Compton-Burnett is summed up largely on the basis of *Mother and Son*, a lone and inferior example; is provided "Elizabeth Bowen's stories" (*The Tree Trunk*); there is a patchy account of Iris Murdoch, and Beryl Bainbridge is discussed without any reference to *A Time to Live*, or *Life*, or *Two Women*. Mary Webb, Angela Thirkell, Margaret Malraux, Margaret Irwin, and Rosemary Sutcliffe are all considered, but not

he recognized, and then, as if by magic, she will join men in running the world. Bachofen's myth now seems to have inspired a new feminist pseudo-scholarship, which one is entitled to practise first by virtue of being a woman and then by criticizing history and literary criticism as traditionally written, and finally by restoring to importance what men had ignored in the past. But to judge from what I have seen of Millet's or Heilbrun's treatment of the classics, I suspect that such "new, feminist" criticism (I can't call it scholarship) will get us exactly where it got Lady Psyche and Princess Ida.

How can we (the writers of women's history) avoid getting nowhere? There has been much talk recently of inventing new myths, or of at least rewriting the old ones. Lady Psyche even suggests this, in Gilbert's parody of Tennyson, the comic opera *Princess Ida*. Heilbrun, in her most recent book *Reinventing Womanhood*, proposes that through a new reading and adaptation of the *Oresteia* "women move from a disorienting 'the motherhood mystique'; there must now be a female Orestes, not literally of course; but getting rid of patriarchal motherhood (not mother) is a necessary preliminary (or if you like, initiation rite) for reconstituting the family on a more equal basis. Heilbrun acknowledges that her version "is not what the play said to the Greeks"; the issue she emphasizes, the "Mystique of Motherhood", is distinctively twentieth-century American, a product of a reaction, both by men and women, to a past when women were leaders and pioneers. But if we don't ask how the Greeks felt (to the extent that we can find out), how shall we ever understand why women are portrayed as they are in those dramas?

To understand (and teach) women's history we need to get beyond the stage of reaction, ie, past Bachofen, and Jane Harrison, and all the recent revivals of their work, back to the full texts of the sources they cite partially, and also to the kind of documentation Bachofen and Heilbrun did not consider at all. The social documents that will tell us most about the real status of women are to be found in places that few standard ancient history courses until very recently considered: grave-stones, boundary markers, wills, marriage contracts, mostly found on inscriptions and papyrus; most are untranslated, most require special training to read, much cataloguing still needs to be completed. Studies of these documents in the last decade have begun to show how mistaken we are if we try to derive our picture of the ancient world exclusively from literary documents, especially dramas

Daphne du Maurier, Margaret Kennedy or Dodie Smith.

Selection is not the only problem. This is the plain woman's guide to female fiction. Readers who may find it difficult to "think hard about so many interesting topics" are warned that *The Golden Notebook* is "no rest cure". Rosemary Sutcliffe (of all people) is described as "daunting". Christina Stoddard needs "hours of careful, concentrated reading". Critical judgements are crude (Ivy Compton-Burnett is "gruesome", Charlotte Yonge is "totally boring now") or breathtakingly simplistic (Graham Greene is "a writer who enjoys active story-telling and has been so often deeply concerned with moral values") or just wrong: she says there is no "experiment" in *Between the Acts*; that Beryl Bainbridge teaches us through her heroines to "relax and laugh and feel better". There are mistakes, as in the pages on Elizabeth Bowen, who is said to have written twelve novels (it's ten). The wrong brother (it's Edward, not Rodney) is said to be in love with his sister-in-law in *Friends and Relations*, the wrong girl (it's Louise, not Connie) is referred to in *The Heat of the Day* - and she is not "the horrified witness of Robert Kilgus's death" who leads about it in the paper. Most disturbingly, the book throughout neglects, apart from a brief mention of the re-reading of Christina Stoddard, to draw attention to Virginia Woolf's

of almost all the novellas under discussion. They are not even found their way into the bibliography. This sloppy approach is not helped by a style which seems to have been pulled backwards through a mangle. There's no very coherent idea either of whether it is possible to pin down what Virginia Woolf (reviewing Dorothy Richardson) called "the psychological sentence of the feminine gender". Remarks to the effect that only a woman could have had the patience to write *The Waves*, or that Nadine Gordimer has the "courage and sensitivity" which women "don't possess by natural law", don't persuade one of the value of considering women writers in this way as a distinct species. There may be a better case, even now, for coupling or comparing women writers according to their class, background, methods, preoccupations and beliefs, rather than according to their sex.

Margaret Barrow's *Women 1870-1928: A select guide to printed and archival sources in the British Isles* (249pp, Mansell, £25, 0 7201 0923 X) seeks to remedy "the lack of a general guide to sources of information relating to women". The volume is arranged in four sections: "Archival sources", "Printed works", "Non-book material", and "Libraries and Record Offices", and is furnished with author, title and subject indexes.

The making of me

By Phyllis Grosskurth

JOHN PILLING:
Autobiography and Imagination
in Self-Scrutiny
178pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£10.50.
0 7100 0730 2

After reading it twice, I must confess candidly that while I think I have an idea of what John Pilling is talking about in parts of *Autobiography and Imagination*, his over-all thesis continues to elude me. His point of departure is disagreement with Herbert Read and Roy Pascal. Read can be disposed of, with his silly claim that no category of literature is so poor in masterpieces as autobiography. All Mr Pilling needs to do in his case is to list Augustine, Cellini, Rousseau, Chateaubriand, et al.

A book like Pascal's *Desire and Truth* in *Autobiography* proves more intractable. "Increasingly", Pilling tells us, "it has come to be realized that Pascal's analysis is less fool-proof than it looks and is in need of some remedial attention." But he never tells us what form Pascal's analysis takes, and his remarks impelled me to re-read it for myself.

What I found was that Pascal makes an energetic attempt to define autobiography as involving the reconstruction of the movement of a life, in the actual circumstances in which it was lived, its centre of interest is the self, not the outside world, though necessarily the outside world must appear so that, in give and take with it, the personality finds its peculiar shape. A very good definition, I would have thought; but Pilling's dismissal of Pascal's book as mere "notes towards a definition" is a cunning way of avoiding the kind of direct confrontation that would force him into a definition of his own.

What he has done is to select the autobiographies of certain modern

writers - Henry James, Henry Adams, Yeats, Pasternak, Michel Leiris, Nabokov, Henry Green and Adrienne Stokes - all of whom have been fascinated by the dynamics of imagination. Pilling's method, so he says, is to treat these autobiographical works as self-contained entities. What this amounts to is a discussion of various books which were chosen, it would appear, simply because he thought it would be interesting to talk about them. The "remedial attention" that needed to be applied to Pascal's book seems to have been overlooked.

But an intense concentration on books which Pilling himself confesses are not "easy of access" makes for difficult reading. This is the sort of "explication de texte" in which the writer is really murmuring aloud to himself. If, of course, one enters are sharp enough, one catches a cul-de-sac line of thought. The great difficulty for the reader is that Pilling's commentary is like a palimpsest: one needs the text open in front of one in order to follow his exposition, and even then he tends to abandon it in pursuit of other truisms of thought.

Since he insists that each section of the book is self-contained, I decided to concentrate my straggling thoughts on two of the writers who seem distanced from each other in every possible way, Henry Adams and Adrienne Stokes.

Adams's ostensible reason for writing an account of his life was to prevent its distortion by a later biographer. I have always been somewhat curious about this explanation, as well as about his ideal of "amplification of self" to which Pilling alludes. It implies that he considered himself sufficiently important for a future biographer to want to write about him. Furthermore, the objectification of himself as a third-person protagonist was surely a form of ironic attitudinizing which only served to draw attention to the narrator. Pilling approaches *The Education of Henry Adams* through the book's form, a reasonable enough way to re-create its structure, but what hap-

pens meanwhile to its subject? Does not even an Adams bleed? Do we not learn as much about Adams through his deliberate exclusion of his wife's suicide as we do about Ruskin in his avoidance of reference to his marriage in *Proteritina*? Fascinating as it is to analyse the formal structure of the book, is it not a little like wandering through an empty museum, echoing and desolate for want of an occupant?

Pilling has added two appendices to his book, devoted to Henry Green and Adrienne Stokes. They are relegated to this position apparently because the English don't generally like autobiographies, and because the authors in question have "transformed themselves as subjects into themselves as objects". More than Henry Adams did? Pilling feels it necessary to give us an explanation of why he has written about Stokes; and, it would appear because Stokes is developing into a cult figure, but because he agrees with Richard Wolfheim that Stokes's autobiographical writings contain "representations, unexcelled in our literature, of the artist and the aesthete in the making", and because Stokes has employed imaginative strategies "that are part of a pervasive tendency in the literature of self-scrutiny in this century", I am not sure what Pilling means by these strategies, unless he thinks that modern autobiographical writing is pervaded by psychoanalytical concepts, which is highly questionable. According to Pilling, "The interest of 'Inside Out', even for a reader who knows nothing of psychoanalysis, resides in Stokes's purposeful but never purely rational elaboration of a mental life."

I am not clear whether by "reader" who knows nothing of psychoanalysis Pilling means himself but he is certainly quite mistaken in what he thinks Freud meant by "a Family Romance". His close reading of *Inside Out*, however, makes this the most coherent chapter of the book. Stokes had been analysed by Melanie Klein for several years before writing his autobiography, and his understanding of how and why he viewed the world as he did, and his belief that certain infantile fantasies had directed him towards art, are both fascinating and plausible. He recalls his childhood through the terrors which he projected into Hyde Park and the gradual attainment of reputation, achieved through recognition of the heat of Kensington Gardens. Later his imagination expanded in the wider world of Italy, ultimately coming to rest in contemplation of Cézanne's paintings, undistorted and serene in their own right.

By not venturing beyond a close paraphrase of *Inside Out*, and by avoiding any psychoanalytical interpretations of his own, Pilling has written an essay that deserves better than its relegation here to an Appendix.

Too Much - "Que sera, sera, / Whatever will be, will be" - she remarks boldly, "this . . . gives a due to the time orientation of detective fiction." What does she mean? "Whatever will be, will be", she adds shortly, "might be complemented by another law: whatever was, was." Might be? Law? Actually, to draw an analogy between "Que sera, sera" and the simple backwards-and-forwards movement in the detective genre seems - to quote Dr Charney's remark about another matter - "fortuitous, arbitrary, highly unacademic, and sad".

It was George Grella who described the detective story as a comedy of manners, in a very perceptive, detailed and cogent essay ("The Formal Detective Novel"). This gives Dr Charney her title, but not her subject: neither manners nor manner receives much attention here. Her concern is solely with form and structure, and this produces a fair number of moments of limited insight. "The murderer at large projects an active danger to the other characters." (Yes, well.) It also leads to an inelegant prose style, with referential models, norms and reality principles to the fore. In the later chapters, however, the critical tone becomes a little less rigid; there are indications that Dr Charney might have had some valuable points to make, if she hadn't gone in for such laborious examination of the basic structural elements of the genre. Her views on Malraux and Father Brown, for instance, . . . the solution tends to produce an understanding that is coloured by charity and tolerance: "human" on Malraux's side, Christian end godly on Father Brown's, reach the brink of discernment. But the study, bare of social analysis, innocent of irony, indifferent to atmosphere, creates the impression of having been undertaken as a rather perverse literary exercise: a diligent search for the most rounded about approach to the obvious.

Criminal constructions

By Patricia Craig

HANNA CHARNEY:
The Detective Novel of Manners
Hedonism, Morality, and the Life of Reason
125pp. Associated University Presses.
£16.50.
0 8386 3004 9

On pages 3, 4 and 5 of this work Hanna Charney considers the sentence: "There must be some explanation for the disappearance of the cucumber." She found it in a detective novel by V. C. Clinton-Baddeley, where it occurs in a book the hero picks up from his bedside table. It occurs him, as it is meant to amuse the reader: it is the lightest of playful touches. In Hanna Charney's hands, however, it gains a great deal of unnatural weight. She considers it as a leitmotif-sentence and explores it (she tells us) on its literal level (as a statement of truth), and on its analogical level (as it expresses themes of the novel). Each word of the sentence is stressed in turn: "There must be some explanation: must and 'explanation' define each other." (Do they? To what precise purpose?) Truly, there is not much comic flavour left about that cucumber by the time the author has finished with it. It is served up as a portion of atodg.

On page 15 a conclusion is reached: "the detective is not trying to prove that the victim is dead; this is established empirically." We might wonder if this is really a profitable observation. Did we need to have it stated so particularly? But it soon becomes clear that Hanna Charney doesn't shrink from generalized comment. Quoting two lines from a very bland, once-popular song from Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew*

Selves and societies

By Charles Madge

J. P. WARD:
Poetry and the Sociological Idea
242pp. Brighton: Harvester. £20.
0 85527 363 1

I can say from practical experience that sociology and poetry do not sit easily together. J. P. Ward has written brilliantly about their incompatibility. With degrees in English from Toronto and Cambridge, and a degree in sociology from the University of Wales, he is well prepared academically for the task.

He begins by distinguishing five main types of sociology: "grand theory" or macro-sociology; social interactionism; social phenomenology; social anthropology; and Marxism. However he uses the term "social anthropology" to mean community studies and statistical surveys in the British empirical tradition, rather than the study of social structure by anthropological methods, which is its more usual meaning. He contrasts it with what he calls "anthropology proper", the study of man and culture, which thus becomes a sixth type of study, possibly not as incompatible with poetry as the other five.

What these five types of sociology have in common is the "sociological idea", which arose in the nineteenth century and has since, it is claimed, come to pervade all our thinking. Two central sections of the book deal with poetry before the sociological idea became dominant and with poetry since it became so. The five poets in the former category whom Ward discusses are Spenser, Donne, Milton, Pope and Wordsworth. He takes the bold and indeed hazardous step of treating each of these as antithetical to one of his five types of sociology.

Thus Spenser "can be shown in uncanny detail to evince a phenomenological view of the world", stressing the visual qualities of things, and their immediate apprehension. In Husserl's terminology, the imagery is "eidetic", but it is deliberately freed from any "social context". Similarly, Donne's love poetry is the antithesis of social interactionism: "For Donne, love is union. But union, by definition, cannot contain interaction." "Paradise Lost" offers an extraordinary parallel to Marxism, but its language, at least until after the Fall, in the language of metaphysical materialism rather than of secular social relationships. Pope, though he shares the "binary mind" of the sociological grand theorists of whom Talcott Parsons is the prime example, through his satire "collapses" his society, and so too negates the sociological idea. Wordsworth is an interesting case, because "the conditions which released the Romantic poets into the world are the conditions which simi-

larly released sociology". A quotation from *The Prelude* suggests that the poet did at one time take the sociologists' road:

I summoned my best skill, and toiled
To anatomize the frame of social life;
Yea the whole body of society
Searched to its heart . . .
but that he gave up in the end:

Sick, wearied out with contrivances,
His poetry draws its strength from
"earth and stones and hills" and
shows "a deeply disturbed attitude
to kinship" and a negative response to
community.

In the section on poetry since the rise of the sociological idea, Ward distinguishes three strategies put up by poets in self-defence against the social. There are those, like Mallarmé, Wallace Stevens and Yeats, who aim at producing "pure" poetry, "the poem itself". There are those, like Eliot and Pound, who, while concerned with social matters, write about them in terms of civilization and history. And there are, finally, those like Hardy, John Berryman and Sylvia Plath, whose poetry is "an exorcism of death", all too literally so in the last two cases.

About all these poets Ward writes with assurance and insight, and when we come to the end of what is a relatively short book, we may well feel that he has made his point with room and to spare. His statements are categorical, whether dealing with poetry or with sociology, and at times I suspect he goes too fast and too far. To give an example from sociology, he says, and rightly, that he cannot possibly try to summarize two immensely long and abstruse works by Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* and *The Social System*. However what he does report about these books is incomplete and, in one instance, untrue. He makes no mention of the lengthy, and surely relevant, Chapter Nine in the latter work on "Expressive symbols and the social system: the communication of affect", in which Parsons writes about "the love relationship", and the emergence and role of the artist. In another place, Ward writes: "It is remarkable that Parsons provides no physical illustration of what he is saying in the entire 550 pages of *The Social System*." But this ignores another lengthy chapter, "Social Structure and Dynamic Process: The Case of Modern Medical Practice", explicitly intended by Parsons to "help the reader to appreciate the empirical relevance of his abstract analysis".

Again, of T. S. Eliot, Ward writes: "As far as I know, he certainly never quoted, and hardly read, a sociological work." This is an exaggeration; he did read such works, those of Karl Mannheim for example, to which he refers in *Notes Toward a Definition of Culture*, where he also styles himself a sociologist. I remember him telling me, with a certain fraternal complicity, that he had a sister in New York who was a sociologist. As early as 1934, in *After Strange Gods*, he has a footnote on social as distinct from economic classes, and another citing V. A. Demant, *God, Man and Society*. And in 1922, in the *Notes to The Waste Land*, after saying how much he owes to Jessie Weston's book on the Grail, he goes on: "I am indebted in general to one which has influenced our generation profoundly: I mean *The Golden Bough*." Even if Frazer's majestic work is ranked by Mr Ward as anthropology rather than sociology, Eliot's statement of indebtedness deserved a mention.

All the same, this is a brilliant and original book.

Miles Michellet the historian was dismissed from his professorship at the Collège de France in 1851 for refusing to take an oath of allegiance to Louis-Napoleon. While in exile in the country he wrote four books of natural history, one of which, *The Bird*, has, perhaps, just been re-issued in paperback in a facsimile of an edition published in 1879 which contains 210 delightful illustrations by Glacemell (350pp. Wildwood House. £4.50. 0 7045 0444 8).

Self-projections

By Peter Kemp

CLAUDE J. SUMMERS:
Christopher Isherwood
182pp. New York: Uogor. \$9.95.
0 8044 2846 8

Claude Summers is bedazzled by Isherwood's "brilliant fictional techniques". *The Memorial*, he considers, "brilliantly dissects" society, and displays "vibrant manipulation of the time scheme". "Brilliantly executed", *Goodbye to Berlin* "brilliantly depicts" Weimar Republic decadence. *A Single Man* "brilliantly portrays" his hero, *Prater Violes* has a "brilliant surface". *Christopher and His Kind* is "a brilliant autobiography".

Given this reaction, it is perhaps not surprising that his monograph, *Christopher Isherwood*, doesn't cast much light on the books. Pleasingly stocked with facts about the author's life, it makes the point that "Few writers have . . . so self-consciously

blurred the boundaries separating autobiography and fiction." But it fails to explore Isherwood's personality and the way this shapes and pours into his writings.

With so self-engrossed a writer, this constitutes a sizeable omission. Isherwood's talent has always had to struggle against narcissism. In a way, bigotry gave it most scope. In the 1930s, to talk about his homosexual life, he turned instead to what was going on around him: the resulting Berlin novels benefit from his masterly ability to record a time and place by focusing unerringly on the telling detail. Later, "I am a camera" gives way to "I am a self-projector". Self-absorption - something Isherwood protagonists regularly brood about - expands enormously. The author becomes his favourite subject: so that even *Koolhaas and Frank*, supposedly a study of his parents, is, as Isherwood admits, chiefly about Christopher. Steeped in their author's personality, these books are far more patchy than those "brilliant" suggestion - more interestingly human, too.

commentary

Down to brass tacks

By J. S. Bratton

Money
The Other Place, Stratford

Edward Bulwer, as he then was (the peers came thirty years later), was already the most popular novelist of his day when he began to think of writing plays in 1893. He was also an M.P. He was therefore in a position to summon Maeredy, the leading actor of the times, to his chambers. Maeredy, for his part, recorded in his diary that he found the great man "dressed, or rather *deshabillé*, in the most lamentable style of loppety . . . his hair, whiskers, tuft, etc., all grievously cared for." He "felt deep regret to see a man of such noble and profound thought" so petty self-conscious. Their respective poses, the image of extreme fashion adopted by Bulwer on the strength of his literary and public successes, and the platitudes of rightness and respectability often voiced by Maeredy to offset the fact that he was a mere player, are plausibly related to the subject of their final collaboration, the comedy *Money*, now revived by the RSC at The Other Place.

The play concerns the inheritance of one of the many English fortunes made in India. Of the men in the family assembled in Act 1 to hear the will, only the poor relation, Alfred Evelyn, shows no cupidity, and he of course inherits. The further complications of the plot rest on his choice of a bride and the lengths to which he is driven to determine whether he is loved for himself or for his money. In 1840, when the piece was first produced, and during the many years of its continued success, the question of what makes a gentleman, whether his demeanour may compensate for or merely disguise the origins of his fortune - whether, indeed, wealth, worth, birth or occupation constitute gentility - were crucial in the lives of the middle-class audience as well as of those who provided their entertainment.

The possibility of mistake and deception inherent in such questions is essentially dramatic, and social comedy, from the Jacobean city play to the TV sitcom, draws its life from the changing social pressures in the world of its audience. Times of rapid change like the early decades of the nineteenth century provoke bursts of such writing, and it may be only lingering prejudice against the Victorian drama that has confined our interest in social comedy of that date to its manifestations in the novel. Revivals like this one, and the RSC's earlier success with *London Assurance*, demonstrate that at least some playwrights shared the concerns of Jane Austen and Dickens.

Bulwer and Boucicault, both drawing on theatrical models reaching back to Ben Jonson, were nevertheless writing about their contemporary world. In the planning for this play Bulwer was particularly concerned with the accuracy of plot details dealing with modern financial methods, and with the realistic representation of the current practice in the London gambling clubs. As he wrote, the crisis of middle-class manners and morals - on the one hand self-satisfied and expansionist, on the other exclusive and self-defensive - was reaching a peak. Hypocrites, rogues, prigs, adventurers, smiles and self-made men and Thackerayan seedy geese rattled about together as people of an ever-nursing mob of people with money to spend, but uncertain of how to spend it so as to secure the status of a gentleman. Extremes of behaviour were common, and they provided Bulwer with an array of "humorous" characters for this play - Lord Glossmore, Captain Smooth, Mr Graves - who all illustrate various ways of making money, respectable or otherwise, and then

using it to procure status and esteem. Even the exaggerated sensibility and sense of honour which afflict his hero and heroine, and almost lead to their fatal separation, are not without precedent in the real love relationships of some of his contemporaries, as Mark Groussard's exploration of the Victorian version of Courtly Love has recently shown.

This is not to say that they all succeed as characterizations. The comfortably melancholic Graves is a safe comic type, and on his compromise between his "sainted Mania" (in heaven) and the charming Lady Franklin (in more immediate proximity) much traditional comic business may hang. He and Lady Franklin have some of the best lines in the play, none the worse for being obviously in direct descent from Shakespeare via Congreve. Miriam Karlin's Lady Franklin is brisk, even occasionally caustic. Her earthy good sense is the more welcome because Arthur Evelyn, the hero, apparently conceived as an inverted Timon (in the original text he was even provided with a group of sycophantic tradesmen on whom to vent his spleen), is muffled by Bulwer's fatal inclination to write fastidiously. Maeredy came to hate the role, calling it that of "a damned walking gentleman", and despite our stock of good will towards energetic young men in black frock coats, Nickleby-style, the verbosity with which he points the moral of the world's behaviour towards him before and after he comes into a fortune becomes very trying. One is tempted to see his incessant self-examination, and his inability to allow us to take the point of the action for ourselves, as proceeding from his author's insecurities, social as well as dramatic.

With their usual avoidance of pretension, and concentration on the stage itself, the company at The Other Place offer only a brief and rather impetuous programme note on the play, suggesting none of the possible justifications for its revival. Consciousness of the comedy's significance in its time is shown only in their attention to period accuracy of visual effect and reference. This extends from detail of costume and props - the top Sir Frederick Blount's blond curls and whiskers, for example, which are the mark of the heavy swell as portrayed by the *Lions Comiques* of the Victorian stage to the set itself, which is a study in heavy carpet-lacks and red plush chairs, the small curvancy of early Victorian house-furnishing elegantly arranged in a fluent formal design perfect as a background and as a playing area. The scene changes, originally conceived for the elaborate resources of the Haymarket, are managed wittily by the addition of flunkeys for Evelyn's extravagant housekeeping on coming into his fortune, and low-slung lamps for the famous gambling scene in Crookford, when he pretends to have lost.

It is less possible to find a way of translating the often mechanically formal stage conventions upon which Bulwer built the play besides with aides, which in *The Other Place* are bound to seem addressed to individuals in the audience, who tend to squirm, or to affect a catatonic indifference. The proposal scene, in which Evelyn's real love, Clara, stands conversing and palpitating upstage as he wittily deceives himself into a proposal to the shallow Georgina, seems to me impossible in such an intimate, open theatre, especially given the emotional intensity Juliet Stevenson brings to her performance as Clara. The formalities of comic play are more manageable, and the slick sequence in which Evelyn bamboozles Cheques out of two of his fair-weather friends neatly encapsulates the paper-money symbolism that runs through the play.

But perhaps the difficulty lies not so much in managing the mechanism of the play, for it works well enough on its comic and satirical levels, even

when we find it uncomfortable, as in the weakness, already remarked, of Bulwer's attempt to underline the play's meaning by scenes and characters which demand emotional responses but find no means to convince us of their reality, because they lack a serious dramatic language. In this, of course, Maeredy's expertise could not supply Bulwer's deficiencies, and a modern audience, still responsive to jokes about love and money, is sceptical about bombast on these subjects. Bulwer had too great a sense of his own importance, as moralist and as Reviver of the Dramas, and so his plays do not stand up as sturdily as those of his more practical contemporaries like Boucicault and Pinero; but he has always been fortunate in his theatrical collaborators, from Maeredy to the RSC, and their parts in this production make it very well worth while.

Voznesensky performs

By Carol Rumens

After sixteen years, Andrei Andreevich Voznesensky was back in London on November 8 to read his poems and, as he told us, test the reactions of a modern audience against those of our 1960s predecessors. Had our souls been hardened by the rule of the Iron Maiden? We waited anxiously to find out what stuff we were made of.

Voznesensky's test piece was "I am Goya", wrongly announced as "Nostalgia for the Present" by Edward Fox, who read the translation. It seemed to set a precedent for the rest of the evening. Fox evidently not having reckoned on any deviation from the predestined running-order, "I am very sorry, it is my fault," said Voznesensky humbly, almost in a whisper, before launching into his first crescendo of the evening. He stopped shouting; we applauded courteously. Voznesensky stepped back and surveyed us. He made some remark I couldn't quite catch - something about our being a "cool country". I had a sneaking suspicion that he'd decided to fail us.

The reading (but of course it was not a "reading" in the English sense of poets staggering on stage laden with printed matter and proceeding to bury their heads in it) - the performance, rather, began with a nice exchange of eulogias. Mr Fox described Voznesensky as a kingfisher; Voznesensky, bravely abandoning metaphor, called Mr Fox "a very great actor". At the end of the evening he repeated this opinion, only it now sounded as if he said "She is a very great actor". It was impossible to tell if Voznesensky was muddling his grammar or trying to make us laugh. The evening had, in fact, been punctuated by nervous ripples of laughter, not always in appropriate places. We British like to be amused, and we were not going to let a Russian poet stand in our way.

Voznesensky, though a greying, smartly dressed and well-fed forty-seven, obviously still considers himself to be a child of the 1960s. His most recent book, *Nostalgia for the Present*, shows him to have undergone a rather touching and boiler-plate affair with the America of the Beats and the Berkeley drop-outs. The poem-play "Under Full Sail", included in this collection, has now been turned into a rock opera; apparently one of its tunes reached number one in the Russian charts. A sample of one of the ditties was wailed rustily across the Round House amplifiers on Sunday night - a pleasant enough tune, though the sentiments seemed not to amount to much more than a kind of Russian "All you need is love". Voznesensky has been reported as saying that the story (featuring an ill-starred romance between a gallant Russian sol-

A mechanical Machiavelli

By Gámini Salgado

Favours
Northeast Theatre, Exeter

When Frances Howard, egged on by the tightly-knit group of politically motivated men and women who formed the Howard clan, married Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, the son of Elizabeth's favourite, she was thirteen and he fourteen. Seven years later she went through a second marriage with King James's estatee Robert Carr, Viscount Rochester, Earl of Somerset. Both ceremonies took place in scenes of great splendour. Jonson wrote a masque for one and Campion for the

other, and both were costumed and staged by Inigo Jones. At both the presiding spirit was King James himself.

The passage from one marriage to the next was not without stumbling blocks. As the Bishop of Lichfield said at the time, "there were not more eyes upon the Earl's father losing his head than now upon the Earl losing his wife". The bishop was one of the members of a commission of inquiry to decide whether Frances's marriage to Essex could be nullified on the ground of the latter's impotence. Other members included the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lancelot Andrews. The question of the bride's virginity was, of course, directly relevant to that of the Earl's impotence and was closely looked into by the commissioners. One man who was peculiarly well placed to give an opinion on the first matter was Sir Thomas Overbury, writer, aspiring politician and secretary and friend of Robert Carr. But Overbury was not available for interview. He had been imprisoned in the Tower by the Privy Council on a charge of contempt towards the king, and died there in mysterious circumstances.

Duncan Forbes's new play is concerned with the events leading up to the marriage between Carr and Frances Howard and the death of Overbury. Both bride and bridegroom were subsequently found guilty of conspiracy to murder Sir Thomas, but the play stops short of that sequel. The opening scenes are set in and around the palace of Whitehall, and the later ones in Overbury's cell in the Tower. The principal players in this macabre pageant are Carr and Overbury, the King and Queen, Lady Frances, and the procreants who aided and abetted her, Anne Turner. The theatrical terms ascribe quite naturally, for it is that aspect of the whole affair which has engaged Forbes's imagination. The play is built out of a series of short compact scenes, each one moving into and out of position on an ingeniously devised sliding floor. The language is a continuously lively mixture of modern slang and Jacobean pastiche. The sententious rhymed couplets which punctuate scene endings and the parody of love sonnets are especially amusing, as is the scene where Queen Anne and Frances rehearse part of a masque, in which a pantomime dragon whose front half is Carr, with Sir Thomas bringing up the rear, defeats on the palace floor.

The trouble starts towards the second half, when the disguised Overbury has discovered the sexual favours of Carr first with the King and then with his bride to be, and has to pay the price for his opposition to the forthcoming marriage. We are asked, in the later scenes, to take an interest in the sufferings of Overbury very different from the detached and sardonic amusement invited by the earlier scenes and very largely incompatible with it. In the original script the play ended with Overbury's agonized death in the Tower, but the staged version shows a glittering tableau of King James delightedly cooing the now reluctant bridegroom in yards of shining silk, the first spun by his newly-inherited silk worms. The theatrical image is dazzling in every sense, but perhaps not finally appropriate to a monarch whose part in the affair was, on this showing, less Machiavellian than mechanical. Richard Mayes finds an appropriate and highly effective blend of coarse vigour and pedantic absurdity for his Jamey, while Anthony May as Overbury almost succeeds in the all but impossible task of moving from calculating courtier to suffering tragic hero. Stewart Trotter's production gives us a short but briskly entertaining evening at the theatre, with brightly highland reels, well-tuned virginals and puns wine-making enough to be genuine late-Jacobean.